

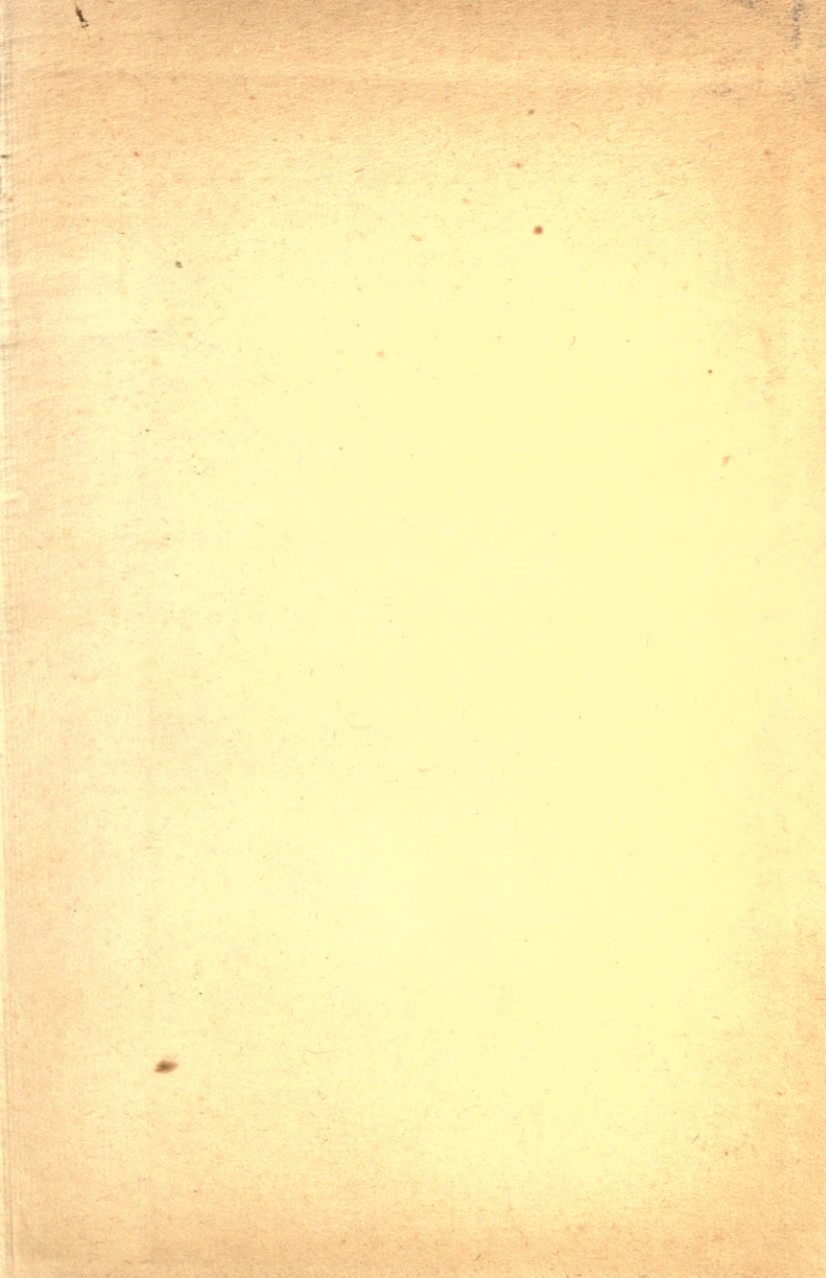
LOVE'S TRILOGY

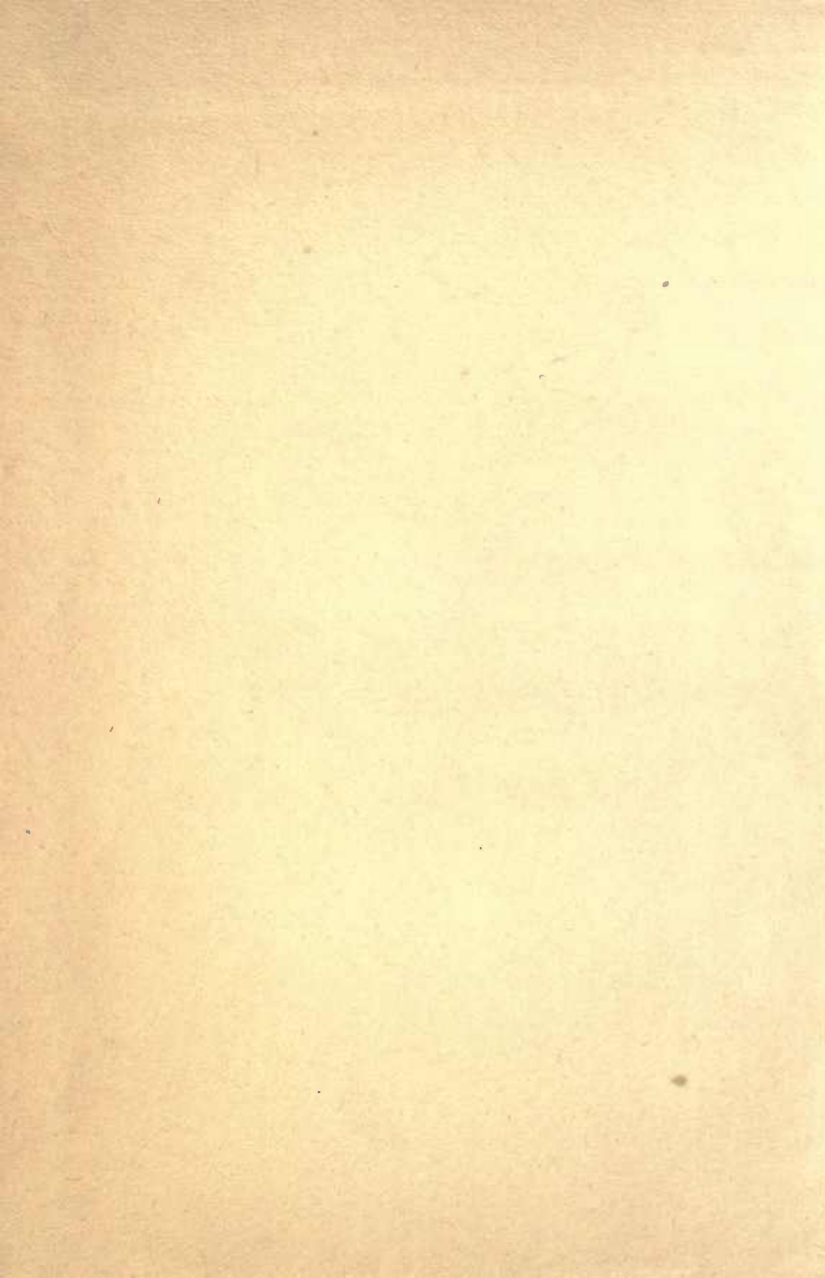


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LOVE'S TRILOGY

Julie's Diary, Marie, God's Peace

FROM THE DANISH OF

PETER NANSEN

BY

JULIA LE GALLIENNE



LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1906

JULIE'S DIARY



JULIE'S DIARY

THIS book was mother's Christmas present to me, and in it I am going to write all my thoughts and everything that happens in my life. I don't mean to flatter myself. I intend to write down the good as well as the bad. In this way the diary will be a truthful mirror. But I wonder when the book is finished, if it will tell the tale of a happy or a sad life? Will it be like a novel with exciting pages, or will it perchance be merely—nothing? Beginning the book I ask these questions with anxious curiosity, meanwhile recommending myself and my book to the mercy of all good powers.

Copenhagen, The Avenue, 27th December 1891.

JULIE MATHILDE MAGENS,

Born the 23rd of April 1872,

Daughter of Flowerpainter and Professor

HOLGER MAGENS.

NEW YEAR'S EVE, 12.30.

HOW solemn is the thought that the old year is finished, and that out of the gloom and darkness of the winter-night dawns the new year. Once more a year has passed—what has it brought

me? Once more a year is beginning—what will it bring me? I can answer the first question. The old year brought me nothing. When I think of it, it seems to me like a long, straight road, a road without a break, without colour, without change. A series of quiet walks all of equal length, all in the same direction, and all through the same melancholy surroundings. How I see it all! In the morning dear little mother and I walking along the Old King's Road to town to do our shopping. We walk quietly, gliding along amongst the many people as though we did not belong to them. We know only a few, and still fewer know us. Yet in a way they all know us, for we belong to the constant wayfarers of the road. 'The widow and her daughter' we once heard a man say as we passed. We smiled when we heard the remark, the words seemed appropriate. Mother, small and slender, always dressed in black; I tall and thin—perhaps rather angular—not very smartly dressed, yet on the whole rather nicely. We never stop on our way, we walk assiduously along, as if it was our business to walk, and we look neither to the right nor to the left. Still this is not quite truthful, or at all events only as far as mother is concerned, for I constantly glance about me out of the corner of my eyes.

We return home, and it is dinner-time. The family gathers. How cold it is in the dining-room, in spite of the rose and fruit garlands with which father has decorated the walls. Mother, Frantz (a

long overgrown boy of sixteen) and I take our seats first, then father enters from his studio. He is tall and thin, and always dressed in a long coat of grey material; he always feels cold and is always suffering from some ailment or other. I believe it is he who brings the cold with him into the room. He looks sharply at us through his gold-rimmed glasses, nods and sits down without saying a word. We eat our dinner as if we were performing a sad duty. We eat very little to get as quickly as possible through the meal. That is the reason we are all thin and pale like plants which grow in the shadow. That image struck me one day as we left the table. As we stood there, three tall, one short, I suddenly thought of a calla we had years ago. We fancied it was dead, and left it in a dark room facing the yard. But one morning when I entered the place, I saw that it had got four new shoots, slender and palish green, each ending in some tiny, transparent leaves.

The conversation at dinner cannot be called lively. It always begins with mother asking father, 'How do you feel to-day, Holger? Has your head been very bad?' To which the answer invariably is, 'Oh, if it was only a headache I wouldn't mind very much, but those terrible pains in my back worry the life out of me.' Next day mother starts on the subject of the back, and it is pretty certain to be the head that is the most worrying.

Otherwise the entertainment at dinner is provided by Master Frantz, who has an elaborate repertoire

of small vices. Frantz, who is at college in the second form, is constantly suspected of laziness, of a life of recklessness in the way of excessive enjoyment of cigarettes and clandestine drinks. He also arouses the displeasure of my æsthetic papa by a certain slackness in manners, by holding his knife and fork carelessly, by rocking on his chair, by neglecting his nails, etc. Thus our dinner is seasoned in a most delightful way.

The evening is the oasis of the day. When Frantz has retired to his lessons or his clandestine drink, and father at ten o'clock has said good-night, mother and I have a cosy chat. We open the door of the stove so that we can see the fire shine through the grating, we put the red shade on the lamp, and make ourselves comfortable on the couch. What do we talk about? About everything and nothing, from the greatest to the smallest, about what we have seen in the papers, about books we have read, about life's great problems, about family events old and new, but above all we talk of love. To hear mother talk of love is so beautiful and so touching, that it brings tears to my eyes. Poor little mother with her big warm heart, who was born to be treated gently by life. Surely she must have had a romance in her young days. It cannot possibly be memories from her married life that fill her thoughts with so much poetry. She did not marry father until she was twenty-seven years old, both her parents had died without leaving her a penny. But it is loveliest of all when

mother tells me of her home, where life was lived in great and merry style with musical evenings, dances, and sleighing parties. Ah, grandfather, grandfather, why did you squander all your money, so that none of the pleasures were left for your poor little grand-daughter? And you, lovely and wonderful grandmother, about whom the legends tell fascinating, naughty fairy-tales, why did I not know you, you splendid woman, who on your marriage day, tired of the great feast and rejoicing of friends, escaped with grandfather and flew off in a sleigh drawn by four horses to the brightly lit country inn, where you two alone continued the feast—you two alone.

If you—from your—I am sure—radiant heaven, could follow your family's earthly strife, I think you would pity mother and me for the way in which we have kept New Year's eve. In our home it is not the habit, as it was in yours, to honour the old year with ringing farewells from friends gathered round a festive board, or bidding the New Year welcome to the merry popping of the champagne corks.

We sat quite alone, mother and I, waiting for the New Year. Each in her own corner of the sofa we sat huddled up, sat during two long hours, not having the heart to commence our usual talk. But when the old, worn-out bells of the grandfather clock, with their wheezy notes, sounded the midnight chime, we started up and listened, and a curious fear crept over me. It was foolish, but I seemed to feel

that an hour of decision was near. Each time the chime rang out it seemed to say, 'Now is your time—now is your time'—until the strokes of the hour ended with a tingling sound as of distant sleighing bells. Then mother took me in her arms, bent over me, and said, as she kissed me: 'You big ugly darling, may God make the New Year bright and happy for you.' And when I answered, 'Thank you for the old year, darling mother,' she patted my cheek and said, 'Alas, that you have so little to thank me for,' and shortly after, with her eyes full of tears, she said, 'I am afraid things at home are not so happy as they might be for my little girl. It is a different thing when one is finished with life, but young blood needs sunlight.' 'But I have got you, mother sweet,' I whispered. She stood up, smiled, and said with that roguish twinkle which she sometimes has, 'Are girls nowadays so easily satisfied?' Then we kissed each other good-night and parted.

I knew what she meant. She meant Erik. Yes, you dear far-off friend, whose few and short letters have been the shooting stars in this year of darkness. If you knew what dangerous conspiracy against your liberty we are planning here, I wonder if you would ever return?

Ah well, perhaps you would all the same. But if you knew in what an ugly and mercenary way I am speculating in you, you would quite rightly despise me. For when I ask myself, if I love you, the answer is—no—and yet, if at this moment you

entered the room and asked me if I would be your wife, I would say yes without hesitation. For you are the only raft in sight—my only chance of escape from this sad wreck, my home, and I cry out into this New Year's eve, help, help—if you heard me and came to me I promise you I would make you a good and faithful wife, always be fond of you, never forget what I owed you. I have learned not to ask too much of life. All I ask for now is liberty. Yes, mother, you are right. I am not happy here, I am longing for warmth and sunshine, I am a poor, pale calla forgotten in a dark room.

I have read through what I have written, and it makes me feel ashamed of myself. Here have I, the Julie Magens they at school called Puck, been sitting, letting the ink drop from my pen like tears. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, dear lady; dry your eyes, and greet the New Year with a smiling face. Of course it will bring you something good if you will only stretch out your hands hopefully. Perhaps the morning will bring me a greeting from Erik. But if in the morning, or rather to-day, I should get a New Year's greeting from him,

Then girls in dance will sway
With roses all the way,
The merry music play
On Julie's wedding day.

This is my very own poem.

1st OF JAN.

WELL, I have reason to be in excellent spirits. I had a letter from Erik. It was quite a long letter, full of lover-like longing for his 'foster-sister' Julie. Erik has nearly spent the money his father gave him for his studies in Vienna; he has also a flattering offer to enter into business with one of the most able of our young architects. If his father will only advance the necessary capital, Erik will return within a few weeks, and 'I have then something very important to talk to you about,' he says in his letter.

In other words, within a month I shall be engaged to Mr. Architect Erik Glerup, and we will be married next April. We will take a five-roomed flat; we will order our furniture from the designs Erik made last Christmas, when we jokingly discussed how we would like to arrange our flat. We will have a charming and comfortable home, lead a sociable life in a quiet way, now and again we will go to the theatre and sit in good seats, we will become respected citizens, we won't owe anything to anybody; on the contrary, we will put something by each year, and for every ten thousand crowns we have in the bank we will allow ourselves a new luxury. We will end by being well off, perhaps by having a title, and by getting the order of Danebrog.

And when 'Etatsraadinde' Julie Glerup, President of the Society for 'the Nutrition of Infants,' full of years and honour entering into the peace

of death, looks back over her past life, she finds it grey—grey, prosaically honourable—honourably dull, which is just what she hates and detests most of all.

But even now when she is neither prosaic, nor honourable, nor 'Etatsraadinde,' and knows to a nicety what the future will bring when she is married to the good, respectable, and clever Erik, she will do it all the same, do it because she is a coward, who, in spite of all heretical thoughts and ideas, is ready to creep into a corner for fear of other people's criticism. It is only in her thoughts and dreams that she has courage enough to wander from that little sod of earth, on which she is sure of finding food. For was not her cowardice distinctly proved, when three years ago, declaring heroically that she could not stand it any longer, she left her home, only to return five hours later like a naughty little girl to be greeted by her father's punishment and her mother's tears.

When I think that this ridiculous flight is the one brave deed of my life, I must blushinglly admit that I do not seem to have been born for anything more exalted than to be 'Etatsraadinde,' and that I, on the contrary, ought to thank Heaven on bended knees if I get so far. Therefore, hurrah for Erik's letter! It is a Christmas message to me. It promises me that before Midsummer Day I shall be a married woman, and the envy of all my women friends—which, after all, is better than nothing.

As this is New Year's Day, there has been a gala

dinner for the family at grandmama's. Considering that grandmama is father's mother, she really is an amiable old lady. Deep in her heart, I believe, grandmama is seriously annoyed with father's behaviour, if it is possible to use such a definite word in regard to grandmother's mental attitude. She sits immovable, planted amongst pillows on her old, straight mahogany sofa, over which hangs grandpapa's portrait in oil—father's first big picture. He is a stiff, lean, ascetic-looking clergyman, dressed in full bishop's robes, with the ribbon of the Grand Order round his neck. Grandmama is like a wax figure, not a muscle quivers in her large, regular, white face, surrounded by the goffered ruche of her cap. For the last two years she has not even had a piece of knitting in her hands. She sits like a symbol of peaceful old age, free from strife and worry. She speaks in the same monotonous voice, whether she expresses joy or sorrow, and she talks as slowly as if the finding of each word was an effort. But in the almost extinguished face burn two dear dark eyes, with a curious, strong fire. They can look at one so steadfastly, and so lovingly, they can question in such a sweet, understanding way, that one feels tempted to throw oneself on her neck and weep away all one's foolish sorrows on her quiet old heart.

The menu at grandmama's New Year's dinner is as unchangeable as she is herself: a real family soup, strong, spicy, and scented with many vege-

tables in which float balls of forcemeat, then boiled plaice, followed by an enormous round of beef, red and juicy. After that, home-made apple cake. With this we drink claret, which is not too generously poured out, but which it is almost a crime to drink, so intoxicatingly beautiful is its perfume: it is a relic from the days of my right reverend grandfather, who died fifteen years ago. At dessert Madeira is handed round.

I cannot say that grandmama's dinners are very amusing, and yet how cosy and comfortable her home is. All inharmonious things must depart in the presence of this dignified old age, even father does his best to be more sociable. What a wonderful appetite it gives one to see grandmama with her kind eyes watching to see that each one gets something really nice and tempting, and to hear her hospitable invitation to second helpings. I smile to think how greedy I am at these dinners, where we linger over each dish, which is handed round with festive dignity by an old maid-servant in a spotless, old-fashioned apron; not to mention Frantz, who stuffs himself with quite indecent gluttony.

At the dessert grandmama lifts her glass and says, always in the same words: 'Then let us drink a happy New Year to every one, but most of all to the young people.' When to-day I clinked my glass against hers, for I sat next to her at dinner, she looked at me for a long time, with her large eyes and said, 'I drink to you!'—'Thank you, grandmama.' She looked again at me and said,

'Am I not right?'—'In what, grandmama?'—'I won't say any more, I am only asking.' I blushed, but the others laughed.

I wonder if anybody has spoken to her about Erik. What else could she mean?

Grandmama is not rich; she has just sufficient to live comfortably in her simple way, but by being economical in daily life, she can afford now and then to give us little presents, sometimes a few shillings for theatre tickets, sometimes a gold piece to buy something useful.

She always hands her presents to us in a curiously secretive way, and she does not like us to speak about what she has given us. When to-day, for instance, after dinner, I sat with her on her sofa, I noticed that she was gently pulling my sleeve. I peeped down and saw that she had pushed something white over to me. It was two two-crown pieces carefully wrapped in white paper, on which was written, 'For you and Frantz to see the new play.'

So if we can get tickets we are going to see *Suleima* on Wednesday. I am so excited about it. You sweet old grandmama!

2nd OF JAN.

GOT up early and was busy till lunch. 'Busy' means that I painted. I am painting under father's supervision, and at present I am working on a floral dinner service for the young Countess B. . . . After lunch, I practised for an hour, then I

went to town with mother, but did not meet a single interesting person. After dinner I helped mother to go through the linen. Played a little for her in the evening. Went to bed early.

3rd OF JAN.

WENT to St. Matthew's church with mother. Lunch. Walk. Dinner. Did some embroidery. Not a visitor all day long. Not a letter. What one would call a delightful Sunday.

4th AND 5th OF JAN.

I PUT these two days together, because they have the same words and music. Got up early, busy till lunch. Practised after lunch for an hour and so on (for the rest see the 2nd of Jan.). I note for the sake of variety that we have got a new neighbour, a young man, apparently rich. He has taken the entire flat in the fourth floor opposite. In the morning, when I am sitting in the bay-window working, I am entertained by seeing this young gentleman finishing his toilette. Without the slightest embarrassment he goes through his process of self-adornment, such as shaving and doing his hair in front of his bedroom window. The window-sill is filled with an array of jars and bottles, combs and brushes, and in this laboratory our neighbour works for an hour, his face expressing the most profound seriousness. I have tried to make him ashamed of himself by ostentatiously pulling down the blind in my window,

but without the slightest effect. When I lowered the blind, he merely glanced up at the sky to see whether the sun could possibly be worrying me, after which he continued serenely to part his hair. On the whole I rather like him. He possesses a natural arrogance which attracts me, a certain conceit which I envy him; I think he is what I should call a fascinating rascal. I'll try to find out who he is and what he is.

To-morrow night *Suleima*. How lovely to go to bed with the knowledge that there is something delicious in store for me the next day. *Suleima*, oh, that I were *Suleima*! That I were the bride of a handsome Arab chief, and could lie with my beloved near the singing brook under the tall palm-trees, or could fly with him on his fiery horse over the wide plain under a radiant sky. Good-night, *Suleima*, I will dream I am in your place.

6th OF JAN.

'**S**ULEIMA' was a disappointment. Yet the music was beautiful—sensuously drowsy, passionately exultant, so wondrously free from moral scruples.

But only one scene made an impression on me. *Suleima* lies down to rest in her father's tent, when an hostile Arab tribe breaks into the camp, and the chief, lifting *Suleima* from her couch, bears her away with him. *Suleima* has been dreaming, and the abduction must be imagined to be a continuation of her dream. She sees the white-robed

Sheik bending over her; she meets his admiring gaze, and hardly awake, she allows herself to be carried away, partly paralysed with fear, partly captivated by his magnetism and by the fantastic violence of the situation.

The part of the young Sheik was beautifully played, though perhaps it was not intended that so much passion and poetry should be thrown into the scene of the abduction. Anyhow, though the part of the Sheik was very small, and he disappeared altogether in the later acts, his performance was for me the most striking feature of the evening.

I have never seen this young actor before. I am sure he has great talent. Now and again I have seen his name in the papers, but I do not think that he was mentioned in the notices of the play.

His name is Alfred Mörch.

7th OF JAN. BEFORE NOON.

I HAD a curious dream last night. I stood in the desert. How I came there I do not know. When the dream began I was standing in the middle of a great sand-plain. I must have walked a long way, for I was so tired that I could hardly move my feet, which dragged after me as if they were chained with heavy leaden weights. Neither could I breathe. A stifling heat, which filled my mouth, nose, and ears, stopped me from breathing. Yet no sun shone in my desert. A grey and woolly sky seemed to close down over me more and

more. It looked like a gigantic felt carpet, which would presently smother me. The sand was not white, but a yellow brown, and sulphurous fume ascended from it. I felt that in a few moments I should be dead. I did not rebel. I did not even try to cry for help, but wept quietly. Then I thought I became unconscious, and I dreamt that I had fallen asleep. In the dream of my dream I heard distant, soothing music—I remember thinking to myself—‘Now they are playing at my funeral’—but the music grew stronger and stronger. I heard trumpets and bassoons and joyous flutes. Then I seemed to float through an atmosphere of wild music which came to me from everywhere, and again I thought to myself—‘You must make haste and waken, or you will be late for the great feast.’ And in my dream I woke. I stood again in the desert, but the music played on, and I heard a voice call ‘Suleima!’ I looked round, and saw far away on the horizon something white and shining, which came nearer and nearer in flying haste. Then I called out, ‘My white Sheik, my bridegroom, my saviour.’ All around me it grew brighter, the clouds lifted, leaving the dome of heaven clear and pure. I felt a fresh breeze, which came from a stream close by, and there in a whirl of music he rode towards me on his black horse, his white cloak flowing round him.

Then I awoke, and by my bed stood mother smiling and saying, ‘You lazy girl, you have slept far into the morning, but you looked so sweet, while

you slept, I had not the heart to wake you. I have been standing here watching you for the last ten minutes.'

8th OF JAN.

ALL day yesterday I was in high spirits. I wonder why, for nothing exciting happened. The hours passed with the usual routine, and father was as like an undertaker as ever. All the same, my heart danced and sang within me, and everything seemed bright and merry. I astonished them all with my gaiety. During our walk, mother had constantly to remind me that it was not nice to laugh so loudly in the streets, and in the afternoon I paid Frantz a visit in his room. I treated him and myself to cigarettes, and he treated me to a liqueur. The boy was quite touched by my kindness; it was amusing to see how politely he suddenly treated me. But when I left he said, 'Please give *him* my kind regards.'

I suppose he thought Erik was the cause of my good spirits. No; the reason was much further from all reality. It was the *Suleima* dream which still lived within me. How childish and foolish it was. But it was even more foolish that mother's words when I woke should have had their share in my happy mood. 'How sweet you looked while you slept,' these words sounded all day in my ears and filled me with tingling pleasure. 'So you really can look pretty,' I said to myself, 'and after all I am not always such an ugly darling.' But what a

pity it is that my good moments should only come when I am asleep. 'Miss Julie Magens had last night a *belle nuit!*' That sounds very pretty, but unfortunately neither I nor any one else has the opportunity to admire the violet that shows its beauty only at night.

But so ridiculously vain had the motherly admiration made me, that instead of writing my diary last night, I held a grand review of myself in front of my mirror.

My mirror is not a royal one, but only a short swinging mirror in a walnut frame, standing on a chest of drawers. I put the mirror slantwise, so that I could see more of my figure. I lit the two candles and placed the lamp on the chest of drawers. In this magical light Miss Julie presented herself in all kinds of flattering poses, and went through a series of mimical gestures. In putting down the results of my review, I am trying to be as impartial as possible.

Julie is tall and rather bony, yet, on the other hand, she is well proportioned. She is narrow across the shoulders and the hips, but at the same time unusually slim round her waist, so that she is far from shapeless, if she would only hold herself better than she usually does. When serious, her face is rather impossible, for her nose is of such quaint construction that it rather disturbs every serious expression. Add to this that nature intended her mouth to be slightly open. When therefore, in serious moods, the upper lip is

struggling to reach the lower one, it gives the face an extremely gloomy expression, naturally therefore Julie's face is greatly improved by a smile. The upper lip falls into its natural place, the large, even, white teeth are seen, and even the nose passes muster. But above all the brown eyes are made to smile. They screw themselves up behind a number of tiny wrinkles, and from their hiding-place they twinkle merrily at you. When Julie stands like this with smiling face, the dark hair falling over her forehead, throwing a kiss to herself in the mirror—her hand is slim and beautiful—she is almost a dear, and even a wee bit—coquettish.

The widow's daughter 'coquettish!' the disagreeable Professor Magens' 'ugly kid' a dear—no, my good girl, either your mirror is lying, or you are an interested critic.

But all the same, when Julie went to bed after the mirror review, she was still in high spirits, and as a result she has just written a long and kind letter to Erik.

She has nothing else to relate about to-day.

9th TO 11th OF JAN.

SAND—sand—nothing but sand. Oh, what's the use of writing a diary about the days always—and—ever—the—same.

12th OF JAN.

MY neighbour is beginning to interest me. On the surface everything in his home seems to be so quiet and correct, yet I think this

mysterious cavalier is leading an adventurous and fantastic life. One hardly ever sees him go out, but he receives many friends, and ladies also come to see him. One lady sometimes comes in the morning, but he does not always receive her. Yesterday, for instance, she left ten minutes after she had entered the house. But I saw our neighbour standing behind a curtain, peeping out to see what had become of her.

Poor little beauty! Don't you think I saw how sad and vexed you were, though you tried to put on a 'don't care' expression and without turning walked down the Old King's Road with very correct demeanour. Oh, you horrid man on the other side of the street, how can you be so cruel to a little love-sick child.

Then there is the other, the favourite I have christened her. She comes in the afternoon, and always in a most mysterious way. She drives up in a one-horse coupé, which looks like a doctor's carriage. She is heavily veiled and wrapped in a big, fur cloak. Her tall and distinguished figure makes a charming silhouette against the light of the street lamp. I believe that my neighbour is very much in love with her. I always know when he is expecting her. He is at the window every moment; he opens it, looks up and down the road, closes it, then goes back into the room to return soon after. When at last he discovers the carriage, he quickly lets down the blind. For a short while his lonely shadow flits about, then another appears

—a woman's shadow. Then both shadows glide away, and I fancy that my neighbour and his lady have gone into the dining-room, and have sat down at the prettily laid table, which I have seen being prepared by an elderly country-clad woman, who is my neighbour's housekeeper.

An hour afterwards the drawing-room is brightly lit. Through the laths of the venetian blinds I just get a glimpse of the large chandelier with its wreath of pale candles and also of an enormous yellow lampshade. In one place a lath is broken, and through this peep-hole I can see the corner of a picture on which the light falls strongly, showing a woman's head and naked arm. But my neighbour and his guest I cannot see. They are most likely sitting on the high-backed sofa, which is partly hidden behind tall plants, and from which one gets a charming vista of the other rooms, which are also lit, the bedroom with its green globe silhouetted like a dim moon against the white of the festooned blinds.

On our side of the street it is dark, and I sit in the arm-chair in the bay-window, giving myself up to fancies. I am trying to imagine myself over there at our neighbour's in the lady's place. Who can she be? Is it possible that she can be a nice woman, a woman I might meet, a woman belonging to good society, and who perhaps, after she leaves our neighbour's, will go back home to play the virtuous daughter of respectable parents just like me? But if I were she, would it be possible

for me to return home without any one guessing that anything unusual had happened to me, and without feeling as though I should sink into the earth with shame? No, no, impossible. It cannot be a lady who visits our neighbour. It is a despicable creature, a woman of the lowest kind. But in that case, why should she be so afraid of being seen? Why should she arrive so carefully veiled? A woman of the demi-monde would not need to hide herself. Besides—I don't quite know, but there is something unmistakably refined and shrinking in her manner, something so mysterious and sweetly-criminal about her, when, after considering a moment, she quickly opens the street door. She must be a lady. Perhaps even a very distinguished lady.

And so my imagination runs off with me. She is a distinguished lady visiting her lover. Who is he? Why has he hidden himself away in this quiet suburban road? At the last reception at Court, when many foreign princes gathered in the king's palace, they met. He a foreign prince, and she a Danish nobleman's lovely daughter. The young prince became so infatuated with the girl, that he could not forget her, and while pretending to be travelling in the Far East, he returned to the North. Helped by his silent and faithful servant, he rented this out-of-the-way corner, and sent secretly this message to his beloved, 'I am here and await you.'

They are together in there, where it is cosy and full of warmth and perfume. The fire crackles in the

stove, there is wine in the cut decanters and fruit in the crystal bowls on the table. They are sitting on the sofa, he puts his arm round her, they lift their glasses up against the light radiating from the numerous candles. They look at the sparkling wine, and they turn to one another smiling happily while they clink glasses. Then he says, 'My dear and lovely one, the hours are flying and soon our happy meeting will be over, tell me do you love me as much as before?' She answers with her arms round his neck and looking deep into his eyes, 'My wonderful prince, lay your head on my heart and feel how it beats. It beats always with a stronger and stronger love for you.'

Or she kneels in front of him in her long, white silk dress; while he gently strokes the loose, auburn hair, he says, 'I have loved many women, but never have I tasted such intoxicating wine as that which I drink from your lips. Many women have told me of their love, but never have I heard sweeter music than when your kisses whisper to me—I love you.' She still kneels looking up at him with eyes in which happy tears tremble. When all lights in the other houses are out and only the globe burns in his room like a dim moon, he leads his beloved to the window, pulls the curtains back, and while looking out on the quiet, white winter night, he points to the window opposite and says, 'Look, over there lives a poor little girl, day after day she sits like a caged bird, longing, longing without knowing for what. Feeling that life contains more than to sit

behind a closed window, painting roses and violets on china. Vaguely feeling that love is the artist, who paints roses on the young girls' cheeks and violets in their eyes. Poor, pale little girl.' And she, the proud and beautiful woman shivers and clings to her lover, weeping softly with pity for the unknown girl and with terror lest she herself should lose her own happiness.

Thus I sit lost in dreams with tears in my eyes because the life I lead seems so empty and meaningless, until the noise of a door opening and a sudden light startles me from my fancies. It is father crossing the room to go into the hall to see if the evening paper has come.

He goes silently through the room with a candle in his hand, and when he returns he says, 'Don't you think it is time to light the lamp?'

Then mother sits up on the sofa, where she has been lying half asleep—or perhaps been dreaming like I. I leave the bay-window, fetch the matches and light the hanging lamp. Without being in the mood for talk, each absorbed in our own thoughts, mother and I take our work from the big basket, always filled with stockings and linen which needs repair—for in our house things are mended ten times before they are thrown away.

16th OF JAN.

HOW foolishly I behaved this morning. Mother and I went for our usual walk. Outside the bookshop in New Street I noticed a

man in a fur-coat, just as we passed him he turned round. I only saw his eyes, they met mine with a quiet, piercing glance. I knew at once it was the actor from the other night, the 'Sheik' from *Suleima*. I grew quite faint, my blood seemed to stand still, rushing a moment after to my head and dyeing my face scarlet. The whole thing only lasted a second, for he disappeared almost immediately. Fortunately mother did not notice my absurd behaviour. I am a fool! What in the world was the matter with me? By chance a stranger gives me a casual look in the street, and I am paralysed. I am furious with myself. I should like to give myself a good beating, and I am furious with him too. This conceited actor imagines, of course, that he has made an overwhelming impression on me, made a new conquest and a victory very easily won.

How curiously things happen in life. I had not given this man a thought since that romantic *Suleima* dream; as a matter of fact I had quite forgotten him, and then this morning I meet him in the street, and this afternoon I hear him discussed.

I went to a birthday party at my cousin Emmy Lorentzen. Emmy, who is thirty-seven years of age, and the widow of a wine merchant, is one of the greatest chatterboxes I know. Under a mask of loving sympathy and in the sweetest way she says the most scandalous things about everybody in the town, about the people she knows and those

she does not know. I admit her chatter interests me: one feels a little bit in the swim of things after a 'lesson' at Emmy's. But afterwards I have a curious sick feeling, when I think of her slimy besmirching of everybody; I feel dirty mentally and physically, and long for a bath inside and out.

While I was playing with her two dear little girls I heard Emmy—who was chattering to some like-minded friends—mention Alfred Mörch's name. I won't deny I grew curious, and that my thoughts wandered away from the game. With one ear I listened to the whispered confidences of the gossips, who put their heads together and looked very impressed and indignantly delighted.

What I caught of the conversation was the following: Alfred Mörch had seduced a young girl, who had since gone mad, and whose brother had sworn to kill him. The story was quite true, for my cousin had heard it from a lady, whose charwoman was the aunt of the servant of the young girl's parents. But this was not all. Mr. Mörch had many other crimes on his conscience. 'No woman can resist him,' said Emmy with an expression of gloating interest in her face. At this point of the conversation I asked, 'What does it mean that no woman can resist this Mr. Mörch? What is this mysterious power he possesses?'

'Yes, my dear girl, you better take care,' answered Emmy. 'I'll tell you what they say about Alfred Mörch. He hypnotises the women he is interested in by looking very intently at them with his shiny

black eyes. He also has a curious way of taking their hands; they say it is like a warm stream rushing through their veins the moment he touches them.'

Though I found Emmy's description of this naughty Mr. Mörch extremely ridiculous, it was with a certain amount of anxiety I thought of my meeting with him in the morning. Of course, I showed no concern, and asked in a careless voice, 'Who is he really, this terrible Don Juan? Where does he come from? Surely as an actor he is not very well known.'

Then I heard the following romantic tale. It had been said that his parents were middle-class people in a provincial town. But that in reality his father was a very distinguished man, and his mother, who was now dead, had been governess in the house of a foreign diplomat. But this much was certain, that from the time Mörch came to Copenhagen as a young student, he had had plenty of money and had a great number of influential friends. He had first studied for the Bar, but for the last two years he had been on the stage. Some thought he had great talent, but most people could not stand him as an actor.

'I thought him excellent in *Suleima*,' I was stupid enough to remark.

'Good heavens, child, he has not half a dozen words to say in *Suleima*.'

'But perhaps he uses his eyes so much the more,' added one of the other chatterboxes.

This made them all laugh, and I forced myself to laugh too. I had a feeling there was something for me to hide, and altogether felt very dissatisfied with myself.

But Emmy patted me on the cheek with her clammy hand, and said, 'Yes, you darling child, beware of those dangerous eyes.'

On the whole it was a horrid day. I had a feeling I had been in bad company, that I had been roughly handled and had not even had pride enough to defend myself. I could cry with humiliation. But I will now cleanse my thoughts by reading before falling asleep. I will read F. P. Jacobson's beautiful poem about King Volmer and his love :

'All my roses I have kissed to death,
While my thoughts flew forth to you.'

20th OF JAN.

Erik will be here in a week's time. I had a letter from him this morning. It is certainly high time that he came, for I am going about here allowing my mind to get more and more influenced by morbid thoughts.

But this is now going to end. Erik will be here bringing sanity and health. We will have a nice confidential talk, and I will tell him straight out that it is best for us both to marry soon. It won't do for me any longer to try to make up for the meagre fare of realities by feeding on the unsubstantial dreams of mother's and my own fancies.

Yes, it will be good to get out of all this, to be replanted in a strong and loving earth, to feel one has something to live for, to feel one has one's own cosy home, where one can breathe freely, and where the air is not full of bitterness and gloom, broken hopes, everyday's petty worries.

Even not having daily to look at mother's sad face will be a comfort. You darling mother, I know it is horrid of me to feel like this. Yet you would forgive me, if you knew in what state of mind I am, and how my young soul is tearing itself to pieces like a caged animal. I must get free one way or another. It will end in my doing something very foolish if my hope in Erik fails. No, no, this must not happen. Your name, Erik, is the talisman I use against all evil temptations. Also against the dark eyes, which now haunt my dreams. The dark eyes which I despise and laugh at, but which never leave me alone. Just as I fancy I have conquered them, they suddenly shine out at me from nooks and corners, from the folds in the curtain, from the darkness in my room where I lie awake at night. Their radiance burns. Suddenly they are there, coming nearer and nearer. They are serious and commanding, they watch me with a sure and quiet force. They say to me 'come.' They have been so near to me that I have felt their glance scorch my own eyes, and I have caught myself starting up to follow.

But this is madness. I have again and again said to myself: What have these eyes to do with me? Why do they haunt me?

I meet a man I don't know. He looks at me and I behave like a silly little schoolgirl. I listen to the idle chatter of some foolish women. . . . Well, what then? Surely that ought to finish the story, but no, it only begins it. Though this is not quite true. Those eyes have haunted me since the evening I saw *Suleima*. Now I understand it, it was the eyes which conquered *Suleima*. I don't remember at all how he looked, I don't even remember the sound of his voice.

Surely, Julie, you are well on the way to madness, and it is high time that Erik returned. I greet you, dear friend, I greet your dear steadfast blue eyes.

23rd OF JAN.

THIS morning I went into the attic to get some linen out of a chest. When I was turning the things over I came across a big black veil. I have never seen one so closely woven, and it was made in the shape of a hood. I put it on and could hardly see through it, and when I glanced at myself in the old mirror hanging on the wall I looked exactly like a hooded nun.

I wonder why mother got this veil and what she used it for?

I meant to have asked her to-night, but when it came to the point somehow I did not do it.

26th OF JAN.

I SAT at the window after lunch. The snow was falling gently in big, soft flakes, just what I always call a real Christmas snow—like myriads

and myriads of white winter-birds slowly descending to earth. Along the deserted road came a carriage with white hood and white coachman, making two black lines in the white snow. The carriage stopped outside our neighbour's house. It was the 'favourite's' coupé. She jumped out, and had almost reached the door, when she suddenly turned round, threw back her veil and called out an order to the coachman, who had already started on his return journey. I had only the merest glimpse of her, but I shall never forget it. I cannot forget the radiance of victorious happiness which shone from her face and figure. The black fur coat stood open, and she wore a large bunch of pale pink roses. Her face itself was like a pink rose, peeping out from its frame of black lace. With the one hand she gracefully lifted her dress, with the other—her glove was pale yellow—she held aside her veil. The snow-birds fluttered down round her; she stood there like spring itself in the snow, so warm and young, so fair and fine.

Then the charming sight disappeared and the street door closed after her.

But suddenly it struck me that it was the first time I had seen her arrive in broad daylight, and that for the last week I had not seen the other young girl, who usually visited our neighbour after lunch.

Was she ill, or had she gone away, or was it all over? Was the door pitilessly closed and was her rival sole favourite? I looked out upon the ugly

black lines drawn by the carriage on the white snow, I watched them slowly being filled with the caressing, covering flakes until they seemed only like faintly remaining scars.

29th OF JAN.

ERIK has come. He called for a moment last night, and to-day he has been here to dinner. The dear boy! how happy he seemed to be with us all again and how little he is changed. Life in the big towns has certainly not spoiled him or made him think less of his old home. He seems just as bright and boyish, just as good-looking and sane, but also just as careless about his personal appearance. The only difference I could discover was that his reddish-brown beard is pointed after the French fashion, that his hair is so closely cropped it looks like a field of stubble, and that his moustache had grown and was waxed at the end. But his coat hangs crookedly as usual, with the left hand pocket bulging from his old habit of thrusting his hand into it, and his collar and tie were as schoolboy-looking as ever, a turn-down collar and tiny, ready-made black tie.

He certainly needs feminine supervision. If Heaven has chosen me for this duty I swear I shall soon make him look different. He is good material and could soon be made quite smart-looking. I should like to turn him out a good specimen of modern progress—smart, yet with a certain quiet elegance. He should always wear a well cut tail-

coat with expectant buttonhole, dark, finely-striped trousers, shining top hat, brown English gloves, and high, stand-up collar.

Yes, my dear boy, if it rests with me, you shall soon be made beautiful. Just wait! There cannot be two opinions that our dinner to-day was quite gay. Even his majesty, cross papa, was graciously pleased to be in decent humour. He had quite an attack of tenderness for me—this showed itself by his pinching my cheek with two long fingers and with a glimmer of a smile behind the glasses, when he said, 'Well, so the professor's daughter need no longer sit alone in the drawing-room, humming the song she had learnt by heart.'

The dinner was very good, and we had lots of red Italian wine, a relic of father's gay Roman nights. Erik was wonderful. He talked and talked as if it was really a happy party. Father laughed and gurgled till it sounded as if water was running through a stopped-up pipe, when Erik told him of the exhibition of symbolistic painting in Vienna. After all Erik is more acute than I thought. Did he not sit there and curry favour with my academical father by running down the young art, which, after all, is very sacred to him. Well, I suppose all is fair in love and war.

With our coffee, we drank real old Benedictine which in our house is a sign that good fellowship has reached its height.

A little later, I found myself sitting alone with Erik on the sofa in the drawing-room. I thought

to myself, now it's coming. I don't know if I was pleased or annoyed; I only know I found it rather tactless and ridiculous of the others to have arranged the situation like this. Erik sat for some moments pulling away at his cigar, until the fire glared from under the white ash. I could see he felt nervous. At last he said, 'I am so happy to see you again, Julie.'

'It makes me happy too to see you.'

'I longed for you so much amongst all those strange people.'

'But you wrote very seldom, and such short letters too.'

'You know how difficult it is for me to express myself in letters.'

'Didn't you make any friends at all in Vienna?'

'Yes. I made one. A Dane I met in a boarding-house where I stayed. He and I became very good friends. I talked to him very often and a great deal about you.'

'About me, Erik?'

'Yes; I told him I had a little foster-sister, the daughter of the man in whose house I had spent my student days, a young girl who had always been so dear and good to me——'

'For whom you did a thousand foolish things, and whom you often saved from the dark room and her father's anger by taking her sins on your own shoulders. But where is your friend now, is he still in Vienna?'

'No, he left long before I did; he had to be back at the beginning of the season.'

'At the beginning of the season?'

'Yes, he is an actor.'

'And his name?'

'Alfred Mörch. Have you never seen him?'

I do believe my heart shrieked within me, but I controlled myself, and said in a careless, almost supercilious way, 'Alfred Mörch, yes, I have seen him once. But I don't think he has much talent, he only plays tiny parts. He is certainly not famous, but he makes up for it by being notorious.'

Erik laughed, slightly irritated. 'Dear me,' he said, 'do you really listen to such gossip? I thought you were far too sensible for that. But what do you know?'

'I know that this dear friend of yours has seduced a young girl, and afterwards deserted her in the most callous way.'

For a moment Erik sat silent, then he said: 'I can hardly believe it. It doesn't sound a bit like Mörch. He is one of the finest men I know. I am sure he would never promise more than he could fulfil. Another thing is that he may have had several love-affairs. He is—and quite rightly—a great favourite with women, and I know, that he has often had letters asking him for rendez-vous.'

'How extremely proud he must be of that, since he has told you about it.'

'No, but it amuses him, surely that is quite natural, and he does not answer these flattering invitations.'

‘But like a true gentleman, he shows the letters to his friends.’

‘Well, you need not get so excited about that, the letters are anonymous.’

I felt so unstrung, I could almost have cried—why, I really don't know. It seemed to me revolting, yes, revoltingly stupid, that Erik should sit there and defend this actor. I had hoped, on the contrary, that his presence would have helped me to force the other man out of my thoughts. I fancied I had almost forgotten him, and then Erik comes and thrusts him on me again. Of course it was impossible for Erik to know—and yet, he was so irritating, as he sat there defending his friend with the dark eyes.

And you, dear solicitous parents, how we cheated you. You had arranged everything so beautifully for your daughter, a good dinner, good wine, old memories in the firelight, and then when mama came in with the lamp followed by the peeping and curious papa, they found the couple sitting solemnly in each corner of the sofa.

Surely it was a case both for laughter and for tears.

5th OF FEB.

EVERY time I meet Erik I feel that the proposal is burning on his tongue, and as soon as I feel that it is going to blaze out, I am there at once with the hose to extinguish the fire.

What dear patient things such men as Erik are.

I cannot understand why he does not bang his fist on the table and say, 'Now, that will do, my good girl, no more monkey-tricks for me. Will you marry me or will you not?' I think it would be a very good thing if he would just take me by the shoulder and make me behave. I should like to see him really angry. I believe I could love him if he would only once make me feel small and frightened between his strong hands. But instead of that he just sits and looks miserable, fearing that I shall put on that weary and bored face which I assume to prevent his proposing.

Why am I like this? Is it only sheer devilry, conceit, and joy in giving pain? No, no, it is not that. But I don't know what it is. I wonder if it will be right for him and me to marry. Good heavens, when I treat him as I do now, what will it be like when we are married, and I have him all day long from morning to evening—and from evening to morning? I do believe, I have always had the same feelings towards Erik, even from the time I was a little kid of ten, and he a big student of seventeen. I was very fond of him, and was always wanting to be with him. But in spite of the difference in our age, I always tyrannised over him. I understood quite well that I was the stronger, and I enjoyed my power with a mixture of pleasure and unconscious scorn. I remember especially one day I had worried him more than usual. He was very busy, and asked me to leave him in peace. But scarcely had I run out of the

room before I was back again. I tickled his nose with a straw, I snatched his pencil from him, I pulled and spoiled his drawing, and was altogether as abominable as a spoiled and naughty child can be. At last Erik really grew angry. He seized me by the shoulder, and lifted his arm. . . . When I looked up at him tauntingly and said, 'Yes, strike me if you dare.'

His arm fell, his eyes filled with tears, and he said, 'Dear little Julie, don't be angry with me. I am a horrid brute.'

Erik, Erik, you irritatingly foolish man, why did you not give me the whacking I so thoroughly deserved. Many things might have been different then.

What's the good of mother taking me to task and telling me that I am a heartless coquette and ought to consider myself a favoured mortal for having won your most excellent heart.

That is all very well; but why don't you win my heart. Why don't you take it with the strong hand of the conqueror, and for once in a while make me a tiny bit afraid. Don't always crouch so humbly at my feet with that irritating 'just as you please, darling' expression in your face.

10th OF FEB.

YESTERDAY Erik's uncle Mr. Glerup gave a ball. I had looked forward to it in the most childish way. It was my first ball this winter, and would perhaps be my only one. After all it turned out to be utter dulness and stupidity.

I was furious with Erik. How could he be so foolish and tactless.

Now that it is over, I see it all too well. The ball was of course meant to celebrate mine and Erik's engagement. To the guests, I dare say, it was a disappointment that they did not get the announcement as an extra cracker at dessert, and for Erik it was more than embarrassing. Then he thought he could save the situation by treating me in a way which made everybody think that we were engaged, only that we preferred to keep it secret at present.

I have never seen Erik quite like this before. He behaved as though he were a shopwalker. He hovered round, paying me silly compliments. Yes, he even kissed my hand during the cotillon. He ought to be grateful I kept my temper and did not box his ears. But when at last in the hall he was helping me with my snowboots, and in the presence of several guests complimented me on my graceful little foot, the foot gave him very gracefully, but rather forcefully, a push, so that he overbalanced himself, stopping any further remarks of this kind.

And the others, Erik's family as well as his friends, came with frequent allusions and amiable impertinences. When a partner invited me to dance, it was done with many little knowing smirks and speeches such as: 'If Miss Magens can possibly waste a dance on me,' or 'if it is allowed,' and Erik, who scarcely left my side all the evening,

bowed with an affable smile as though he was giving the permission.

When the ball was over, Erik insisted on seeing me to the cab. I whispered to him, 'Please don't come,' and he understood that I meant it seriously. I cried all the way home as if I had been whipped, and when I got into my room I tore off my pretty frock as if it was a rag.

To think how pretty I looked, and how happy I was when I started off, and mother herself tucked me into the cab. I wore a pale blue tulle skirt and long pointed bodice of silk with large puffs of tulle on the shoulders. I love to look at myself in a low-necked bodice, and I liked the tiny ruching of lace between the soft skin and the coloured silk. When I said good-bye to father, I noticed that even he was satisfied with me. He nodded approvingly and said, 'blue crocus.' To-day I am so nervous and cross that nobody has been able to speak to me. I would not go out with mother, and have been sitting all day long sulking in the bay-window. It rained and was miserable out of doors—grey, heavy, and terribly depressing, and indoors everything seemed cold and ugly. The rooms looked so worn and faded, so poor and joyless, the black horsehair chairs, the old red table-cloth and the hideous bronze lamp hanging by its thin brass chains. I myself red-eyed and weary, with stiff face and feverish hands, so dejected and untidy. Blue crocus indeed! an unattractive withered flower ready to be thrown away.

I looked up and my eyes fell on our neighbour's window. There he stood in evening dress with white buttonhole. He stood looking over at me with a faint smile on his lips.

I don't know what came over me. But suddenly I left my place at the window, went into my room, took out pen and paper and wrote in a disguised hand: 'Mr. Alfred Mörch: a young girl wishes to ask you a question. She will look out for you on Saturday the 13th, at seven o'clock in the evening, outside the Northern Railway Station.' I sealed the letter, addressed it to the theatre, put on my coat and hat, and took it to a letterbox.

To explain why I did it is quite impossible. I did not reason at all, until it was all over and I stood once more in my own room. Then I laughed quite hysterically and would hardly believe it was not a dream. No indeed, I had done something most unconventional, I had written to an unknown man, an actor and a well-known Don Juan into the bargain, asking for a rendezvous. Oh yes, yes, I knew everything that could be said, that it was stark, staring madness, and I am fit for a lunatic asylum. Indeed, I should soon be there, if my dear parents knew what I had done.

Well, I don't care. After all it is rather fun to have done something really terrible, especially when, as in this case, it won't have any consequences.

12th OF FEB.

IT is to-morrow that I ought to meet Mr. Mörch outside the Northern Railway Station. But to do myself justice I must add, that I have not for a moment dreamed of going to this rendezvous.

Of course he won't be there either. Erik said he never took any notice of the anonymous letters he got.

But suppose he went after all. It would be awfully amusing to see him trot up and down at the meeting-place. The conceited idiot with his horrid black eyes. I can see him quite clearly with the fur coat up to his ears and the stock under his arm.

How I should like him to go, and to watch him without being seen.

I think I will invite Erik out for a walk to-morrow afternoon. Then, should Mr. Mörch be there, I am sure I shall never be able to resist the temptation of telling Erik that he is waiting for me.

13th OF FEB.

'ALL good little pictures turn round to the wall,' and you, my virtuous pen, make a blot over it all!

I have done something terrible. I have sunk as deep as it is possible for a decent girl to sink, and the sadness of it all is that it has made me quite radiant.

I start herewith my sinful report. To begin at

the beginning, when I woke this morning the sun shone brightly into my room. I jumped out of bed and took my cold tub. My heart was so glad, my mind so bright, as though I was preparing myself for a feast. I remember I said to myself while I dressed, 'To-night at seven o'clock at the Northern Railway Station a fairy-tale will commence, and the name of the fairy princess is Julie. Far away in a distant castle, in a big wondrous wood, Julie has heard of a horribly conceited man who every day boasts of having conquered the hearts of innocent little girls. On hearing this Julie gets extremely angry on behalf of her sex. She swears a solemn oath, that she will punish the wicked seducer and humble him in the dust. Helped by her clever servant, Julie sends her enemy this message: that a virtuous and beautiful maiden has become so enamoured of his lustrous black eyes, that she will await him on Saturday outside the Northern Railway Station. The conceited fool arrives at the given time, sure of an easy prey. He sees a closely-veiled princess—in her mother's chest Julie has found an impenetrable veil woven by good fairies—when he approaches her, the princess breaks into mocking silvery laughter and disappears. Afterwards—well, afterwards—the fairy tale ended, what happened further I could not imagine.

But I was quite clear on one point. I was not going to the rendezvous. Unknown and unrecognised I would go and enjoy Mr. Mörch's curiosity

and listen to his ensnaring words, to disappear with the mocking princess's laughter.

After dinner I said to mother that I wanted to call on Emmy. She looked a little surprised but was really rather pleased, and I started soon after. It was half-past five in the afternoon. Earlier in the day I had fetched the fairy-tale veil from the attic, and I took it with me in my pocket. I went in the omnibus to Tivoli, walked then to the Boulevard where Emmy lives, paid her a short visit—to prove I had been there—wrapped myself in the veil on the staircase and hastened with beating heart to the rendezvous.

From a little distance I saw that it was five minutes past seven by the station clock. I was pleased that I was not too early. I glanced in all directions, he had not come. I only saw a solitary cab waiting in the lonely white square outside the station. Not a soul, except the driver, to be seen. I felt as if a bucket of cold water had been thrown over my fairy tale. Here stood the proud princess a perfect laughing-stock. She had quite forgotten to reckon with the possibility that nothing would happen through the non-appearance of the conceited young man.

I had already started on my way back when—my heart almost stopped beating—a tall figure came from the other side of the cab. A tall, fur-coated figure. It was he. In a moment he was at my side. I did not look at him, I only saw his shadow in front of me, and I heard his voice saying, 'Lady, the cab is waiting.'

This experienced impertinence gave me back my self-confidence. 'You are mistaken, I do not need a cab.' God bless you, darling mother, for your veil, which allowed me to observe him while he could see nothing but my black helmet. With some uncertainty in his glance, he tried in vain to pierce through my mask. Then he said, feeling his way, 'Is it worth while sending the cab away at once? I mean one is always more sheltered.' I said quickly, 'Please, send it away,' and I rejoiced in my cold-bloodedness. He bowed slightly to me, went back to the cab, paid the driver and gave him a message, and the cab went quickly away in the direction of the Boulevard.

We were alone. I said, 'Let us walk on,' and I went towards the Klampenborg Station, he following at my side. After a short pause he said, 'Well?'

'Well,' I repeated.

'Well, dear lady, what was it you wanted to ask me?'

Unfortunately I had quite forgotten to have a question ready, and to gain time I said, 'It is a wager between a man and myself. He has bet me six bottles of French perfume.'

'And it is I who have to decide the wager?'

'Yes, if you will be so kind. It means a great deal to me.'

'Six bottles of French perfume. Well, let me hear.'

'I should like very much to know—please do tell me—is Mörch your real name or your theatrical name?'

He did not answer at once. Just then we were passing a street lamp, and in the light he tried to see my face through the veil. At last he said in a cold and sarcastic voice, 'And it is merely to ask me my name that you have arranged this meeting.'

It was evident he felt quite angry, which amused me. I was shaking inside with laughter, but said seriously, 'Yes, Mr. Mörch, if you would be so kind as to do me this service, I won't keep you a moment longer. Probably some one is waiting for you.'

I glanced at him. He looked rather calm, but his voice trembled when he answered, 'You are evidently either very amusing or, forgive me, very foolish.'

I, in an angelic voice, 'How unkindly you speak to me. Have I offended you?'

He, with dignified coldness, 'Offended me, no; but to tell you the truth, it seems to me rather ridiculous to drag me out on a cold winter evening to this remote place, simply to ask me what my name is.'

I quietly and modestly, 'I never thought for a moment you would come, for I have been told that you get so many anonymous letters.'

He, a little softened, 'I came only because your handwriting interested me. Though disguised, it was so ladylike, so dainty and original.'

'You flatter me, Mr. Mörch, but really there is nothing in the least interesting about me, not even the fact that I am in love with you. Perhaps you thought I was?'

He looked as if he wanted to bite my head off, but did not answer. We had reached the park, and at the corner of the Boulevard I stopped.

'I must go home now, Mr. Mörch. I wonder if you would be kind enough to answer my question.'

'Only on one condition.'

'And what is that?'

'That you show me your face and tell me your name.'

'But why? What pleasure can that possibly be to you?'

'Do you really think my request so unreasonable. Allow me?' and he stretched out his hand to lift my veil.

'No, no, you must not do that,' and I hurried along the path. He followed me. Neither of us spoke. At last, when we were again walking quickly side by side, I said, 'How lovely the park is with all the snow-powdered trees. It looks like a fairy-tale garden.'

'Oh, yes.'

Snow-powder, fairy-tale garden, and all other poetical things had evidently not the slightest interest for him, and I thought: the situation is getting impossible, he is just as stupid and irritating as Erik.

Then suddenly he stopped and said, 'Well, good-bye, and many thanks for to-night.'

'And after all, you won't fulfil my wish?'

He planted himself straight in front of me and

looked at me—looked at me for a long time, I thought, and with curiously cold eyes, which made me afraid, yet drew me to him. Then he said quietly and politely, but with a lovely ice-cold distinction in his tone, 'My name is what I am called. I trust that is your bet, and that you therefore will win your wager.'

He lifted his hat to me, and was already going away. When—I don't know why—I would not, could not, lose him in this fashion. I tore the veil from my face and called, 'Mr. Mörch,' and when he turned I stood there smiling with outstretched hand, saying, 'Don't be angry with me any longer, let us part good friends.'

I have never seen any human creature change so completely. It was as if his face was suddenly in the sunlight, his eyes shone gay and bright, his voice became soft and cooing. We talked together like two comrades, who had known one another for a long time. He told me he knew my face quite well, only he could not remember where he had seen it.

He begged me again to tell him my name. 'No,' I said, 'I cannot tell you that to-day.'

'Then another day, for perhaps you will meet me another day.'

I did not know whether I wanted to say yes or no, but I said, 'Perhaps'; and I asked him just afterwards, 'Do tell me, where did you think of taking me in that cab?'

'To a restaurant or to my rooms, just as you

liked. To a place where we could sit in peace together and drink a glass of champagne.'

'Then you really imagined that I was a lady of that sort?'

'What sort? I assure you all sorts of ladies like drinking champagne.'

'Yes, but not with you.'

'Do you really mean that? Seriously, do you think it would be so terrible if we two spent an amusing evening together?'

'No, perhaps not, if you would behave just as nicely as you are doing now.'

'I will behave just as you wish, you may be sure of that. Will you come then and dine with me on Thursday? I am free that evening.'

In short, it ended with my almost promising to meet him on Thursday at seven o'clock in the King's Square. He talked me into such a trusting state of mind, that it all seemed the most natural thing in the world. But how it will look to me in the morning, how I shall square my conscience, and how I shall manage to get away from home I don't know.

Well, sufficient unto the day. In the worst, or rather the best, case, I can stay away.

Then on Thursday evening Mr. Mörch can wait at the meeting-place and look at the stars. Besides, what pleasure could it really be for him to meet me.

He said I was lovely! What a fib!

14th OF FEB.

WHAT happened yesterday seems like a dream. But my diary proves the dream to be a reality. What I have done seems to me so fantastically meaningless, and yet I think it is the only thing in my life worth writing about. But again and again, I say to myself, 'You silly little fool, you ridiculous heroine, who has behaved just as unheroically as thousands of other little girls.

Yes, if I loved him and he loved me. But it is nothing but a mood and a fancy on my side, and on his a moment's sensation, a piquant chance which suddenly comes his way, and on which he graciously sacrifices some hours of his time.

To begin with, I hated him. He had suddenly begun to play a part in my life, he—a stranger, a man to whom I really meant nothing—had suddenly become master of my thoughts and dreams. His eyes commanded me, and I wished to free myself from them and from him.

Yes, that was how it happened. I simply had to meet him at close quarters, to battle with him, as one does with a real human being. I had to get the dream-being, the Sheik from *Suleima*, transformed into the actor Mr. Mörch.

This is the explanation, the excuse for my asking him to meet me.

I wanted to free myself from him, and I ended in promising to meet him again.

I wished to feel myself his strong opponent, which I was to begin with. I enjoyed feeling his nervousness, his stupid sulkiness, and his curiosity. I played with him, I teased him, I tortured him!

But just as I fancied myself victorious, he conquered me. I can still see him standing in front of me, bidding me good-bye in polite, sarcastic words. I felt his glance like a whip across my face, and when he turned to go I suddenly grew terrified of losing him. I called him back, I felt it was weakness, yet it made me happy.

This stranger! for he is a stranger to me, though I have never felt such good friends with any one before. It was utterly impossible to feel reserved and superior with him. His words and his voice seem to draw me towards him in such a natural yet respectful way. There was something exquisitely musical in the way in which he tuned his attitude to mine. The only times I have felt anything like it before have been when dancing with a partner who firmly and fearlessly led me into the rhythm of the music. When I close my eyes, I can still hear his voice. Yes, indeed, there is rhythm in that voice, and I feel as though I was dancing—a languid, softly gliding dance.

I hear his parting words as he took both my hands, looking smilingly into my eyes, saying, 'Good-bye, you very charming unknown girl, whom I am so very happy to have met.'

It is curious that eyes can change so much. In the future his eyes will never frighten me.

Neither will I be frightened of meeting him again. On the contrary, it will make me happy and amuse me. If it was only not so absurdly reckless.

But after all, is it so foolish to be reckless? Who will thank me for never doing anything but what is dull and proper. Why should one be so frightened of stealing a lovely flower from a garden along the dusty road one has to walk. I believe I would joyfully climb the fence in spite of a torn gown, if it were not for mother's anxious glances. Your sad eyes, mother dear, frighten me. Should you discover anything, you would not be able to understand. You would think me a lost soul. And yet, the veil! How did that become your property? When did you have any use for that in your life?

This veil, which whispers of secret wanderings and to which the scent of forbidden flowers seems to cling.

15th OF FEB.

ERIK was here to-day. We talked of nothing but Mörch. Erik asked if I would not like to meet him. I answered, 'No.' I made up a story about a woman who knows him, and who had told me he was a very dull person.

Of course Erik at once began to sing the praises of his friend, treating this woman's opinion with

disdain, not allowing her a farthing's worth of brains. Of course, she was a goose herself, on whom Mörch could not be supposed to waste his wit.

Yet I defended my client's case cleverly. I invented lots of new accusations and faults, which I enjoyed hearing Erik oppose.

Poor Erik, if he only knew!

When mother and I said good-night to each other, we had a big scene of tears and misery. I wept just because she worried me again about Erik. Then she wept because I said she was only thinking of getting me out of the house, and did not care at all whether I should be happy or unhappy. At last we both wept in mutual recognition of life's sadness and in mutual repentance over all the cruel things we had said to each other. This home excels in rain-storms. I almost think it must be worse here than in—Bergen.

16th OF FEB.

IN case I keep that rendezvous to-morrow, I had better look out in good time for a 'screen.' For this purpose I have thought of Christiane, the only creature in this world in whom I can fully rely. I have never had any intimate friends. For though Christiane is called my friend, my slave would be more the word. She is the daughter of a common but well-situated man; she went to school with me, but always felt herself to be of common clay. In a moment of magnanimity I befriended her and being

feared for my sharp tongue, nobody dared to offend my protégée.

Christiane has ever since worshipped me with faithful constancy. But it would be far from the truth to say I have spoiled her. To no human being can I be so horrid; she irritates me with her cringing manners and frightened looks, the dog-like respect she, the tradesman's daughter, feels for me, the poor professor's daughter, rouses my scorn. On the other hand I cannot very well do without her. I like to be master over a human soul, and without a murmur she allows me to pour all my bad humour over her head, while she, radiant and happy, enjoys my sunny moods.

My faithful Christiane is like a blond pumpkin. Her head is round like a ball, her hair thin, yellowish and lustreless, she has no eyebrows, a bit of a nose, and eyes like button-holes. In figure she is a lump.

Yet she is not exactly what one can call ugly. She is only an absolute nonentity. She lacks all that makes an individual amongst the common herd of humanity. But as she is, she is happy. She has no ambition, no wishes on her own account, her hopes and wishes are all for and with me.

During the last year she has thought of nothing but Erik. Every day she sits thinking that now he is going to propose, and is quite nervous, when she fancies the great moment has come. Yet when to-morrow I call and tell her that I am going to meet another man, and that she must help me

—she will certainly look a little bewildered for a moment, but she will neither dream of reasoning with me nor of interfering with my plans. She will quietly try to grasp that it is not any longer Erik and an engagement which is the order of the day, but recklessness and rendezvous, and when the hour for the meeting strikes, she will sit at home with a heart beating like my own, and she will, like the horrid glutton she is—enjoy all my dainty food and champagne in her thoughts.

17th OF FEB.

I AM most likely going to the rendezvous tomorrow. When I have had that experience I will settle down. Again I will become a virtuous lady, and before I accept Erik's proposal I will, like Queen Dagmar in the old ballad, confess my terrible crime.

I called on Christiane this morning. She became quite excited at the idea that we were going to a rendezvous. I instructed her in her part. Tomorrow she will come and ask me to dinner, and she will also promise mother, that I shall be seen safely home afterwards.

There is no social intercourse between Christiane's parents and mine—they hardly know each other by sight—and there is, therefore, no possibility of being discovered.

Christiane thought it all extremely romantic and fascinating. I had really, in the end, to remind her that it was not at all becoming to a young girl to show so much eagerness.

18th OF FEB.

LAST night as the bell of St. Nicholas's struck seven o'clock, a tall, veiled lady came round the corner of Little King's Street out into King's Square. A tall man with a fur collar turned up to his ears steered straight towards her. A cab followed the man. The driver opened the door. The mysterious couple disappeared in the carriage, which quickly drove off.

A few moments later, a cab stopped inside a dark gateway. The driver pressed an electric button near a door. The door opened at once, and in the white electric light a most superior-looking waiter stood bowing. He opened the carriage door; a man in a fur coat assisted a heavily-veiled lady to descend. The superior-looking person showed the way up a staircase saying, 'This way, if you please. The red room is reserved.'

This was the promising and rather romantic beginning of an evening which, on the whole, was a disappointment.

I am almost ashamed to confess it, but I was not far from being bored. The fête lasted three hours. We ate a quantity of delicious things, but I had no appetite. We drank champagne of course, but I had to be careful so that I should not look flushed when I reached home. Otherwise, we sat there talking to each other in most sedate fashion as though we were at a confirmation dinner-party at Professor Magens's.

But what annoyed me most of all was that my Don Juan evidently found the evening extremely successful. After dinner he sat down in a most comfortable easy-chair, sipped his liqueur and smoked his cigar in leisurely and most careful fashion, while he looked amiably at me, talking to me in a kind, uncle-like voice as if I was a baby.

In the midst of it all he asked, 'Well, is it so dangerous after all to drink champagne with me?'

Ye gods, no! dangerous, one could hardly call it, but not very amusing either.

I wonder was he merely acting a part, or is he, by nature, such a cold fish.

Just for a moment after we entered the room, and the waiter had left us, he seemed so utterly different. I stood in front of the mirror taking off my hat. He stood behind, politely helping me. When at last I had finished by smoothing my hair with my pocket-comb, and turned round, he caught my hand and said, 'Now may I be allowed to look at you?'

I asked, 'Well, is it a disappointment? Do you regret you are going to spend the evening with such an ugly girl?'

'Ugly?' he answered, 'just the reverse.' For a moment he seemed to consider the question before he continued, 'I hope you don't want any compliments. You are not beautiful, but you are quite lovely. Fresh and young, like leaves in May, with a skin like fruit blossoms, and I have never seen a mouth so like a cherry before.'

He said this quite simply, as if he wanted to strike a quiet note, but the sound of his voice was so gentle and honest, his eyes looked so warm and happy. For a moment a heavenly feeling came over me, a feeling of bliss, of triumph, of weakness.

I grew calm again, when, in the most matter-of-fact way, he said, 'I wish I could be allowed to kiss you.'

How hideous and stupid this was. Just like the other day when he started by saying that the cab was waiting.

I answered gravely and severely, 'Let us make a compact, Mr. Mörch. I am delighted to spend the evening with you—that unconventionality I have allowed myself. But you will have to behave in such a way that I shall not have to repent this evening too much. Remember what you promised.'

'Yes,' he said, 'that is just the reason why I asked to kiss you. Had we not made that compact the other day, I would have kissed you without permission. But I'll keep my word. I'll behave just as you wish me to, and now we won't talk any more about that.'

He said it politely and smilingly without a suspicion of annoyance or disappointment, and the rest of the evening he was the same polite, contented, and smiling being. Yet how changed he was.

That this indifferent bon-vivant who, at dinner and afterwards, affably entertained a young girl, he, of course, considered a silly little goose, could be

the same Romeo who, a moment before, had made the same little Juliet blush—was still more incomprehensible than the sudden change he underwent the other day. I wonder what he really is? He does not give me the impression of being an actor, on the contrary he seems so natural. All the same, I have a feeling that he is constantly acting, and it amuses him to bewilder me by playing first one and then another part.

Of course I told him who I was. I had also to keep my promise. I believe he was more than surprised, though he pretended it was not the case. He only said 'Indeed,' and looked rather curiously at me. I don't believe he thought I belonged to such a good family. And altogether I believe that throwing up my anonymity gave him something to think of. Shortly after he said, 'Then you know architect Glerup?'

'Yes, very well indeed, and so do you.'

'You know that?'

'Yes, Erik Glerup has often talked of you. You have a good friend in him and—an admirer.'

'Yes, Glerup is an enthusiast.'

I laughed.

He: 'Why do you laugh? At Glerup's enthusiasm for me?'

I: 'To tell the truth, yes—I must confess I am a little disappointed.'

Now one must not think that this disapproving remark affected Mr. Mörch. On the contrary he smiled most pleased, lifted his glass, winked to me,

and said: 'Glerup's health, Miss Magens! I am at all events not disappointed to meet another object of his admiration.'

How his calmness irritated me. Nothing, nothing seems of any importance to him. As he sat there in his easy-chair he looked as if nothing in the world could shake him out of his lazy content. I do believe that if the sky had opened suddenly and a couple of angels had dropped down on his knee, he would without turning a hair have drunk their health. Whether I like him or not is evidently of no earthly consequence to him. I had a clear sign of this when we drove away from the restaurant. At my place at the table was lying a beautiful bouquet. I would have preferred to have taken it with me as a souvenir of my only romance, but when I said to him: 'It's a pity about the lovely flowers, but I don't think I dare take them home with me.' To which he drily answered: 'They are certainly not worth keeping; they are half faded already.' Truly one cannot call him an eager or poetic gentleman.

He saw me into a cab to the corner of our street. When nearing home he asked me when and where we were going to meet again. I answered we were not to meet again.

'Dear me,' he said. 'Why so severe? I was looking forward to seeing you at my home; you would be more cosy there than at a restaurant.'

'No, that is quite impossible. Besides, I don't want to come.'

'Oh, very well.'

He sat in deep thought. But when the cab stopped, he said—and his voice had again that lovely gentle sound: 'You can believe me or disbelieve me as you please. But I have never before seen a young girl as lovely as you, and I am very, very sorry that you won't meet me again. Good-bye, and many thanks for this evening.' He opened the cab, and when I gave him my hand in farewell, he bent his head and kissed it.

'You can believe me or disbelieve me.' Yes, if I only knew if he was honest or merely acting. But after all it is finished, and so much the better.

Absolutely finished. He did not even propose a new meeting. Surely that does not prove great eagerness on his part to see me again.

The romance is finished, and it is a good thing that it was not more romantic. Without blushing too much, and in the knowledge that it was something quite done with, I could tell mother, who was waiting up for me, a long story about the dinner at Christiane's.

But think, if he had not *asked* me for the kiss—think if he had continued the bewitching tune—think if he had taken advantage of my weakness!

Are you really a gentleman, Mr. Mörch, or merely a trifle stupid?

19th OF FEB.

CHRISTIANE came this morning to hear what happened at the rendezvous. Not to disappoint her, and not to make myself ridiculous, I

gave her a fascinating description of the evening's reckless enjoyment. And Christiane being a romantic soul fed on library novels, I told her that my cavalier had brought me a pink silk mask, which I put on each time the waiter entered the room, after having discreetly knocked three times at the door.

For each bottle of wine I uncorked, Christiane's round face became more and more flushed, and at last she asked, quite intoxicated with my description: 'Well, Julie, and when did he kiss you?'

I should like to have seen myself, when, with my best duchess air, I answered: 'Please, spare me your housemaid point of view, Jane. Do you really think it is good form to kiss at a rendezvous?'

Christiane answered in a shame-faced way, 'I did not think such a thing quite impossible.'

'Well, you see,' said I, out of my great experience, 'at a rendezvous amongst nice people, the kiss belongs to a much later period. The cavalier must pay his respects for a long time before he finally kneels at the feet of his lady-love, and if she considers him worthy, she will reward him by giving him her hand and perhaps her cheek, which he reverently touches with his lips.'

Overwhelmed with admiration, Christiane looked at me and said: 'Yes, but to be made love to in that way, one must be awfully refined and clever.' I finished by giving a little lecture about the fact, that the only reliable happiness consisted in con-

quering temptation. Though my rendezvous had been extremely successful, and my cavalier had been devoted and courteous, I had decided never to see him again.

Christiane applauded my heroic decision, but wept with pity when thinking of the poor deserted shepherd.

If she only knew that the shepherd's name is Alfred Mörch, and that he asks his shepherdess for a kiss in exactly the same voice in which he would order a shrimp sandwich.

21st OF FEB.

THANK heaven I took the letters from the postman this morning myself. There was a dunning letter from my shoemaker. I owe him sixteen crowns for the patent leather shoes I bought for the ball at Eric's uncle's, and which mother thought I had paid for with the money I got on the 1st of February from Countess B.

Unfortunately no. For in money affairs I am the most careless person in the world. The money I got from the countess I owed my dressmaker, and the poor soul declared that she could not possibly wait any longer.

I am in a nice hole. I have made up my accounts, which show that I owe the following: sixteen crowns to my shoemaker, who must be paid soon; five crowns to my glover, who won't give long credit; and five crowns to Christiane; in all twenty-six crowns. My assets being only one crown and

fifty öre and nothing more. I have finished the work for the countess, and have at present no more orders, and the ten crowns I get from my parents each month vanish like dew before the sun.

What am I to do? Mother cannot help me, and besides I dare not admit that I did not tell her the truth. Should I try grandmama? Still, it is very difficult to explain to her; I fear I may break down in the middle of my story. I know of course where I could get the money. Erik would be quite delighted if I asked him to help me. But I am ashamed to go to him. Besides he might misunderstand me. If I was engaged to him it would be a different thing, but now, no, for my own sake, I could not possibly do it.

How disgusting it is to be a young girl. One is dependent on all sides—socially, morally, and economically. If only we had money enough the rest would not matter so much. Then one could do as one pleased. Think how lovely to be out of debt, and not to have to deny oneself anything. Not to be obliged every time one wants anything to go to mother, who again has to go to father, who grumbles and says 'no' ten times before he finally consents to give the money. How horrid such money is which one literally has to beg for, and which is thrown at one with surly words.

Of course, I could marry Erik. Then I would be out of all my difficulties. Erik would not deny me anything. He would be pleased to fulfill my every wish, happy to see me look as pretty as possible.

Two months ago I had no doubts about marrying him. It seemed to be a predestined thing not to be altered.

But when he came, I hesitated, and now it seems quite impossible. It seems like throwing myself away. Like giving up all greater happiness just to save myself from the little worries of daily life.

Perhaps this is only foolish imaginings for what greater happiness awaits me. Yet, I cannot.

22nd OF FEB.

LIFE is not so sad after all. There is a kind providence which helps little girls in distress. My providence takes the form of an old lady, who wears little white caps and sits on a large sofa, and is called grandmama.

I rang the bell this morning with a trembling heart. Old Marie opened the door and said: 'Oh, how nice, Miss Julie, that you have come to-day, my mistress has been longing so much to see you.'

I went in to grandmama, sat down on the visitor's chair opposite the sofa. A little refreshment was as usual arranged on the table, a glass with strawberry liqueur and a plate of biscuits. Grandmama sat looking at me with her large, quiet eyes. I told her—a little nervously—what I had been doing since I saw her last. 'Eat something, child,' she said, 'and drink a glass of wine, that will bring some colour into your cheeks.' I emptied the

glass in one gulp to get courage, and I began nibbling a biscuit. But it stuck in my throat. Meanwhile I talked and talked, but I hardly knew what I said. Grandmama's eyes never left me, and again she nodded thoughtfully. Suddenly she said: 'Well, child, what is the matter with you?'

'Nothing at all, grandmama'; but in the same moment my eyes filled with tears. Grandmama nodded again, and said almost in a sly voice: 'Get up, child, and go over to the chest of drawers. Pull out the top drawer, and take out the green book with numbers on it.'

'Yes, grandmama, I have got it.'

'In that book are some blue pieces of paper, two of them are for you.'

You darling blessed grandmama, you wisest and best of all human creatures.

Now I am on top again. The shoemaker has got his money, and the glover can wait till the first. I ought really to have paid him the five crowns, but Frantz borrowed them from me as soon as I got home. Poor boy, he is hard up as well, and to-day I could not bear to see him miserable.

Altogether, it has been a good day for me. Erik came this evening. He was also in good humour. We had the following conversation: 'Do you know, Julie, you are beginning to have a great success. People are beginning to notice you, and think you lovely.'

'Indeed, and may I ask who do you mean by *people*?'

‘ Alfred Mörch.’

I, inwardly horrorstricken, outwardly indifferent:

‘ But he does not know me at all.’

‘ He has seen you in the street. He was walking with a friend who knew who you were. I tell you, he was quite wild about you. I have never heard him speak with so much admiration of any other woman.’

‘ I ought, I suppose, to feel extremely flattered, but you must excuse me, I am not. I don't value Mr. Mörch's opinion of me in the least.’

But, of course, I value his opinion. That is, it amuses me that I did after all make an impression on this wooden figure that he has not quite forgotten me. Well, well, this pleases me muchly, dear sir.

I should very much like to know whether he has intentionally filled Erik's ears with my praises, so that it might travel back to me. Did he mean that Erik, without knowing it, should do service as postillon d'amour? It is a clever idea, but not very refined. But should Mr. Mörch have had such intentions, I am, at all events, pleased to know that the answer I have sent him through his messenger is not at all encouraging.

25th OF FEB.

ERIK came this afternoon. When we were alone, he pulled half-nervously a letter out of his pocket and gave it to me. I did not know the handwriting, and asked ‘ Who is it from ?’

‘Look for yourself,’ he said. And added, ‘Of course, it is only a joke.’

It was a letter from Alfred Mörch, asking Erik and me to dine with him. My first impulse was to be angry. I thought the joke was in very bad taste, but just as I was going to speak about it to Erik, my eyes fell on the first letters of the first lines and I read a word. This stopped what I was going to say; I blushed, grew embarrassed, and finally left the room. When I got into my own room I spread the letter out before me and read as follows:—

‘Can and will you, dear lady,
offer one of your evenings to
me, an unknown friend of
Erik’s? If so, I hope you will be
able, both of you, to come before
long, say at seven-thirty
on Thursday next. My address is
number 38 Corn-Market Square.
Erik will, I trust, assure you,
dear lady, of the respect and
of the sincere admiration of

Yours truly,—ALFRED MÖRCH.’

At first glance there was nothing mysterious or curious about the letter. But if one read it, guided by subtle intuition, the first letters of each line, a tiny letter appeared within the letter, a secret little message, saying, ‘Come alone, do.’

It was impossible that this could be mere chance. I felt sure it was a cunningly arranged game; and

why should I deny that I thought it a very amusing one. It seemed to me so romantic and recklessly adventurous, to carry on a clandestine correspondence in this fashion, a correspondence unimportant and innocent to the one, bringing secret messages to the other.

Quickly I wrote my answer, and brought it in to Erik. With dignity I handed it to him, and asked him to read it, at the same time expressing the hope that in the future I should be spared his and his friend's jokes.

My answer was :—

‘ Dear Sir :

Please accept mine and Erik's best thanks for the rather curious letter you have sent us. I ought to be angry, but I think Erik is possibly most to blame, so therefore I forgive you both.

Yours,—F. M.’

Erik was evidently not very pleased with my answer. I hope it will be more appreciated by Mr. Mörch, and that he will understand how to find in it that ‘perhaps’ which, like a balance, weighs Julie's virtue and recklessness.

3rd OF MARCH.

A WONDERFUL, an unforgettable evening. Never before have I had such a good time. Now I know what it means to be happy. It was as

beautiful as a dream, and it is still with me with all the vague mistiness of a dream.

I have been in a bright and beautiful world, where everything was radiant, and radiant in my honour; where everything was done to please me, and where my wishes were guessed and fulfilled almost before they had shaped themselves in my own mind. I have been in a world where all speech seemed frank and amiable, where everything was arranged for enjoyment—enjoyment refined and without violence, giving me a feeling of unspeakable content. I have been to a place of peace and confidence, where nothing at all seemed frightening to a shy little girl.

I remember it all as a dream, a dream of silver mist and faintest blue.

A trembling ascent up a creaking staircase, with frightened glances at all the names on the doors. Then suddenly a suffocating heart-beat at seeing his name. At the same moment the door is opened, and a guiding hand gently draws me in.

In the front room a shaded light. Beyond, between portières, a sense of warm and festive cheeriness. I am in the midst of a large cosy room. A voice bids me welcome, a face smiles to me, and the voice continues, 'Thank you so much for coming. I have been longing for you. Now, be a dear, and put away all these wraps, and let us have a really nice time together.' My fear vanishes,

I feel calm and confident. I give him my hand and we laugh to one another like two old friends happy in meeting again.

Immediately I am in the enchantment. I am quickly at home in these rooms. Though the impression is one of great simplicity, I have a sort of feeling that the furniture is old and costly, but it all seems to give peace and comfort to soul and body. I am treated as mistress here, as the lady of the house, and I feel I belong to this place, and to nowhere else in the world.

I am led in to table. An elderly quiet woman brings in the dishes, changes the plates, pours out the wine,—everything is done without an order. The woman seems to consider it quite natural that I am sitting at her master's table. She looks kindly at me, and I smile to her.

We eat, drink and talk. His face shines with kindness and pleasure. I never thought his face could shine like that. We laugh and drink each other's healths, and when the meal is finished he kisses my hand, offers me his arm and leads me into the sitting-room, where many candles and lamps are lit, without giving any garish feeling. A sweet scent of hyacinths fills the room, and I find delicious rest in a huge arm-chair, in front of which he pushes a footstool, while he props me up with lots of pillows. He busies himself about the room, offers me a cigarette and yellow liqueur, and does not sit down before he has asked me if I am quite happy, or if there is anything else he can get for me.

I wish I could sit here for all eternity—here in his beautiful room, where he speaks so gaily and cleverly to me, and in a more refined way than anybody else I have ever known. He looks smilingly at me with eyes which are no longer black and dangerous, but boyish and good. I feel as though I could allow myself to be a little foolish, just to be a child, and to look up to him as to the very best parent in the world.

It does not help me at all that I say to myself that I am silly, and that he is perhaps only laughing at me, taking it all as a joke. Nobody in all the world has ever been to me as he was to-night, so perfect, so wonderful. If any evil or cunning thought was in his mind, I won't ask, I won't know. I only know that now I cannot let him go, and that he did not need to ask me to come again, I should have come all the same. I know that I love him, that I am unspeakably happy, and that I shall pass all the night in tears.

4th OF MARCH.

I HAVE gone about in a dream all day. I hardly know what I have said and done. I remember only that I have felt curiously and sweetly sad, that I have found everything beautiful and everybody good. I myself have been sweet and good too, and feel as if I must show them all here at home how much I love them.

I went for a lovely walk with mother in the beautiful spring weather, the first real spring day

we have had. Now I am delightfully tired, longing for sleep—for sleep and dreams.

10th OF MARCH.

I LIVE in eternal restlessness. Every day drives me along in a whirl of fear and devil-me-carishness, heaven-blue joy, and black despair. Whither will it lead? What do I wish, and what will he do with me?

But through it all I hear the terrifying and ever-returning cry: 'Does he love you? or is he only a little bit more in love with you than with any other young girl he meets on his way?'

I was with him again yesterday. I had hoped he would say something which would make me understand him better. But he was just the same dear, gentle and bewilderingly sweet being, but, at the same time, so absolutely passive, so reticent, so elusive.

Yet I tried to break through his reserve a little, and asked: 'What did you really think of me the day you got my letter?'

'I thought it was from a lady who was in love with me,' he answered most calmly.

'But when you heard it was only a wagger, what did you think?'

He looked smilingly at me before he answered: 'Well, to be perfectly frank, I did not believe it for a moment.'

'Then you thought all the same I was in love with you?'

'No, but when I saw you, I hoped you would be.'

I was silent for a while, then I ventured to ask the following question: 'But if I should fall in love with you—of course you know that is not the case now—but if?'

'Then, it would make me very happy.'

'But it would be a pity for me—for you—well you——'

Then it was he should have said the words I was hoping and waiting for, but instead he only answered as if he wished to finish the discussion: 'Dear lady, that is a question we need not discuss. I can only repeat what I said the first time we met: You need fear nothing from me; I will never ask you for more than you will give of your own free will. I leave the development of our friendship entirely in your hands. I am pleased and grateful when you come here as my friend; it is a joy for me just to see you in my rooms. But (this with a smile) should the day ever come when you will give me more than your friendship, you know it will make me intensely happy.'

Of course, in a way, it is extremely nice and correct of him to ask nothing, and yet if he was really in love with me, would he be so discreet, and is his discretion anything else but cautiousness, fear of responsibility and worry?

Sometimes, when I think of him, I long to hurt him, to tear the mask off his face, to pull him to pieces, to see if there is any passion behind. I wonder if he can laugh loudly. I wonder if he can

cry. I wonder if he can feel deeply like other human creatures. In my thoughts I can hate him and his ever-smiling amiability, his superiority, his perfect correctness. He is like a machine, not a creature of blood and heart and nerves. But I know that when I see him, when I am with him, all revolt dies away in my soul; his calm and smiling eyes kill all will-power in me. His firm tranquillity conquers my thoughts, so that I have only one idea,—to please him, to bow down and obey him.

He says that the development of our friendship is in my hands. As though he did not know, that he holds me in his hands, and can do with me as he pleases.

12th OF MARCH.

I AM terrified with myself. I, who have never done a thing without confiding in mother, now lie to her like a trooper. How low, disgusting, and undignified it is to lie like this. In reality I am not at all ashamed that I love him and go to see him. It is the only thing of value in my life. I feel that I am growing through my love. Before I felt I was in the shade, now I am growing in richness and colouring in the sunshine. Why should it then be necessary to sully and degrade my happiness with denial and untruth?

But if I was honest; if I told the truth, one of two things would happen: either that I should have to give him up, or that I should leave my

home to go—where? The first I cannot do, and the second I dare not; yet if he should say 'come to me.' But he will never, never do that. I would not ask such a sacrifice of him. Therefore I have no choice, and I must lie and lie again, steal away to my happiness, sneak away from home with terror in my heart, being prepared on my return to be received with the awful words: 'You are found out.'

I lie till I am hot all over with shame. I lie madly, unable any longer to find reasonable excuses for my constantly going out. I cannot understand that mother has not yet noticed anything.

The most revolting thing is that I have to hide my love for him under a mask of friendship for Christiane. To have to deny him, who is my pride, and swear allegiance to Christiane, to force myself to be nice to her to secure her help.

Already, knowing how necessary she is to me, she has started to treat me in a conceited and aggressive manner. With her questions she offends what seems most sacred to me, and with her coarse, plebeian greediness she fumbles all over the dearest secrets of my soul; those I hardly dare to reveal to myself. I get so angry with her that I could hit her round, fat face.

Even you, my not-much-loved papa, I could have kissed yesterday, when you said at dinner: 'What on earth does your sudden passion for Christiane mean? She looks, Heaven help her, nothing more than a vegetable marrow on two sticks.'

16th OF MARCH.

HE asked me to-night if I was going to marry Erik. I answered wilfully in an undecided way. I wanted to see what impression it made on him.

He answered: 'Erik will make a good husband, which is more than I can say of myself. I belong to the people who are charming to meet now and again but who are intolerable in daily life. I am cross and difficult, and when I am studying a part I am quite impossible. You will hardly believe it, but there are days when it is absolute torture to me to speak to a human being. My wife would certainly not have an easy time of it.'

To this I said: 'Thanks for the warning. You need not be afraid. I don't want to marry you. I have never looked upon you as a candidate for marriage.'

Later he returned to the same subject: 'Then you could imagine marrying Erik?'

He sat near me on the sofa, my right hand rested on the table in front of us. As I did not answer at once, he took my hand and repeated his question in a whisper. Then I said, or I believe I said, that I fancied there had been a time when I really meant to marry Erik, but that now—'Well?' I heard him whisper, 'Now I know it is impossible.' 'And why?' his face was close to mine, his eyes looked so imploringly and warmly into mine, I felt the blood rush into my face, everything became vague and hazy, I felt faint, and then—well—then

he had kissed me and I him, and I heard him say 'thou' to me, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world that I also said 'thou' to him. I don't remember anything more than that he held me in his arms, and I heard him say, in a voice which still trembles in my ears and makes my heart beat with joy, 'My own darling little girl, my beautiful little girl.'

Yes, one thing I remember, that I said to him, 'ut I am not the least bit beautiful,' and he answered: 'You are more beautiful than anybody else: you are the whitest, the daintiest, and the sweetest in the world. You are just what the old poets call a—virgin-flower.'

When I came home, I had to look in my mirror, and, lo and behold, I really thought that I looked quite sweet. I am sure that is what one calls suggestion. He fancies me beautiful and I become beautiful.

20th OF MARCH.

I AM afraid of my diary. Several times I have taken it out and put it back again without writing a word in it, for in front of that I have to look truth in the face, to account for myself and to make it quite clear, what is happening to me. I dare not look at the present or into the future.

I know that I am on a slope and that the way irrevocably goes downwards. I fear all the terror, all the misery lurking in the depths, and yet I am drawn irresistibly towards them. For each step I pull myself back, I seem to slip two forwards. I hear already the roar from down below, I feel the cold splash of the

waves. Even God cannot help me, for I will, I must go down. I dare not think, I dare not feel. Only when I am with him, I am at peace. When he speaks to me, the warning bell of home ceases to ring in my ears. When he looks at me, the threatening pictures vanish before my eyes, and I see only flowers and sunshine, and all the most beautiful things in the world. When he holds my hands, I know that whither the road leads, it leads to happiness. In his arms, everything which is outside him is forgotten, dead, and left behind as the maid sings in the old ballad: 'He fills my ears, he fills my mouth, and he my sea-king bears me down to his palace deep under the sea!'

22nd OF MARCH.

THERE is disturbance in our neighbour's camp over the way. Yesterday the grand-piano was taken away, and to-day workmen took up the carpets in the flat. I wonder if he is breaking-up his home. I shall miss him a little. It seems as though I knew him quite well, and when we looked over at each other, it was as if we had mutual secrets.

Curiously enough I have never found out who he is and what his name is? I don't know why, but somehow I have never liked to ask our maid, who, I am sure, would have been able to tell me. I preferred to keep him as a mystery, and have been quite afraid to find out some day that his name was Petersen, and that he might, for that matter, be a grocer or something equally ordinary.

I cannot help smiling when I think that, in my thoughts, he has even played the part of a prince. I was only a child then, who knew nothing of life, who only lived in dreams. Beautiful and delightful it was to dream, but it is a thousandfold more beautiful and delightful to live, at least when one is in love. I ought to add, especially when the loved one is dearer and more beautiful than even the prince of Illyria.

To-morrow I am going to my prince. I am going in my sweetest frock and can make myself look as pretty as possible, for they think at home that I am going to a small dance at Christiane's. I was not more excited when I went to my first grown-up ball. My mind is like the sky on an April day, now radiant, dancing sunshine, now heavy, lowering clouds.

23rd-24th OF MARCH, 1.30 NIGHT.

I GOT through all right. Though the gods alone know how. I had prepared nothing to say, but rattled along about the food, about who had been there and all that kind of thing; said at last I had a headache, and got quickly away from further motherly inquisitiveness.

And now quickly to bed, down, down under the clothes to hide myself away and not think. Sleep away from all thoughts. Though why—why should I not think. Why not think the only thought which is in my mind—that I am yours, yours. Yours I am of my own free will, because you are

more to me than father and mother and everything in the world. Because everything else means nothing to me, if I may only be in your life, if I may only be allowed to love you, and you will be good to me.

You, my only one, my dear one, good-night; my thoughts go out to you with a thousand kisses, ah, may they meet yours.

24th OF MARCH.

WHEN I woke up late this morning—because I did not fall asleep till it was almost morning—I said to myself, even before I had opened my eyes: ‘This will be a sad day for you.’ But in the same moment my eyes met the clear sunshine of the day, there rose within me, like the song of the lark, ‘Good-morning, fair maiden, good-morning to all life’s delights.’

And I jumped out of bed, looked into the glass, and saw clear eyes, blushing cheeks, and a dimple like a kiss. The whole has been a great surprise to me. A surprise that I am not unhappy, but most of all a surprise because nobody seems to have discovered the slightest change in me.

Therefore, apparently, I must be the same as before. No red cross on my forehead, no black mark on my nose. The same to every one except to myself. For to me it is, as if from the narrow chrysalis, which shrouded life’s wonderful meaning, I had flown out to the radiant brightness of revelation, as a butterfly intoxicated with happiness. Before, my walk was heavy, now it is as if I glided lightly

over life's worries as if I had wings, bearing me away from all difficulties. I stand on an earth which lifts itself under me, and I embrace a heaven which lowers itself over me. Joyous music is round me and I myself am like a song, rising upwards and upwards.

What does it mean to lie? To have a secret so sweet and glorious, that one cannot share it with any one. It is easy to lie, but a lie is a hideous word with a beautiful meaning. What else does the sun do, when hidden behind the clouds, it lets a lonely little ray steal out to the violet on the bank? What else do the birds do, when they play hide-and-seek behind the foliage of the trees?

I walked through the town to-day. I met thousands of people. What did they see in me? A young girl like thousands of other young girls, who goes for a walk guarded and protected by her mother. But what they did not see, what they were not allowed to see, because it was her glorious secret, was the glance the young girl exchanged with a young man on the other side of the street—what they did not see was that at the corner she took two bunches of violets from the flower-girl, lifted them to her lips and only bought one, while he at once bought the other one, which he kissed.

How splendid it is to be alive, how splendid it is to be young. Let come what may. Let the future be ever so black. That happiness which now raises itself like a golden temple in my heart will throw its reflex through all the darkness of time.

And now, beloved, bend your head close to me and let me fill your ears with my joyous confession, so that you shall not forget it—I am happy, happier than any word in the language can say, for all the words are made for commerce and traffic and not for the joy of lovers. I am happy to be yours, happy that you have chosen me—good-night.

25th OF MARCH.

WHEN this morning I sat in the open window enjoying the sunny spring air, I saw my neighbour busily occupied. He was packing books and pictures into a big box. While he was thus occupied, the favourite's carriage came driving up. On hearing the carriage, he glanced quickly along the road, and hastened to draw the curtains over the window. The lady got out and as usual the carriage drove away. I thought no more of this and had already forgotten my neighbour and his friend. I sat looking out into the bright spring day and my thoughts wandered away to other things which were more important to me. I suppose five minutes must have passed, when I saw the favourite again come out of the street door. She was still veiled and she pressed her hand to her heart, and seemed scarcely able to walk. For a moment she stood leaning against the door, then she drew herself up, put back the veil from a face uncannily white, crossed the road—I now stood up to watch her—and looked up at our neighbour's windows.

Was it imagination, or was it fancy, but I seemed to hear a mocking, threatening laugh. Then the figure disappeared along the road.

My bright spring mood had vanished. I could not get out of my thoughts the pale and tortured face with its impotent, almost absurd, defiance, and all day long sounded in my ears the bitter laugh of humiliation, the laugh I heard . . . for I *must* have heard it.

What a hard and brutal man he must be. Yet, I should not have behaved in such an undignified way in her place. If his infatuation had passed, surely she must have noticed it. Even if he had not wished to speak out, she ought to have forced him to tell her the truth. This I know, that if the day should come when I feel he is growing tired, that moment I shall leave him. I shall never allow him to feel our relationship a bore. I am too proud to live on his mercy, and pity. Not even a complaint shall he hear. I will disappear from his life and nothing shall ever remind him of me.

I am glad I am not going to see him again tonight. I have been so miserable all day, I fear I should have burst into tears.

And I, who ought to surprise him by being such a bright and happy girl. I must try to sleep away all the ugly thoughts.

26th OF MARCH.

THIS morning, two vans carried away our neighbour's furniture, and he followed in a cab. Just before he was going to leave, he came

to the window and looked over to me. He tried evidently to catch my eye, to send me a mute good-bye. But I pretended not to see him.

Now he has gone and the flat is empty. I am very glad. I feel as if a nightmare had been lifted from my heart and again I breathe freely.

And to-night I shall regain my happiness in his arms.

1st OF APRIL.

MY dearest love, this letter, which you'll never see, shall tell you all the words which die on my lips when I am with you, die because they seem too childish and silly for you—you wise and prudent man.

Here, where you are only present in my soul, here I can speak to you, without fearing to meet the ironical smile in the corner of your mouth, the smile I suppose you are very proud of, because it raises you so high above a little ignorant loving girl.

Anyhow I must tell you how and why I became yours.

In reality you don't know me at all. You have every reason to think badly of me, for the way in which I came to you was as though I was merely saying, 'Here I am, please, take me.' I became yours because instinctively you understood me. At all events you understood so much as to realise that you had met a little being whom it was necessary not to frighten, whom you had to treat as something very fragile. The first time I was with

you I always sat ready to fly away at the slightest surprise. A hasty word, a too violent caress, and I should have flown. The words you did not speak were those which conquered me. I don't think you know me in the least. Now I am yours, and I will continue to be yours, as long as you will have me. But if you think that it is your kisses and your caresses which make me yours, then you are highly mistaken. I am no Miss Goody-Goody, no angelic prude. I drink your kisses as joyfully as the fern drinks the summer dew. I am yours with desire and with joy. I am yours because I want to be yours. I don't want to be like quicksilver, which disappears in your hands. Dear lord and master, all that is mine I give you without sophistry and reservation. But what I should like you to understand is this: I could quite well do without your caresses, my love would be quite as strong without them. It would hurt me to think that you took me for a little Miss Light-of-love, a little Miss Kiss-in-the-corner, who came to you with warm blood and reckless desires.

I wonder if you can understand this, I wonder if you will believe it. All I ask is to be with you, see you, listen to what you say; yes, I would even be happy with less. You say, that often you are not in the mood for speech, that you need to be in peace with your own thoughts. Do you know what is my greatest wish? That on such a day, when you lock yourself in, alone with your art, that you would then allow me to be in your room,

quiet in a corner. I should be as quiet as a mouse, you should not feel yourself obliged to pay me the slightest attention, you should only allow me to enjoy the happiness it would be for me to know that of all people on earth, I was the only one you could suffer in your lonely moments.

In my fancies I often enjoy such an hour. I try then to guess the thoughts that are moving within you. I see you then with half-closed eyes, with nervously twitching eyelids. Your head resting on your hand. But whenever I see you suddenly lift your head, and look up with large, shining eyes, then I know you have got the bright idea you were seeking, and my heart beats joyfully in tune with yours. At last I see you triumphantly stretch out your arms with a smile of victory on your face, you re-light the cigarette which you have allowed to go out while you were thinking, and suddenly remembering that your little girl is in your room, you come over to her, take her hand in yours, and say how glad you are that she is with you, and how awfully good and dear she has been, not disturbing you in the least.

Do you never, never think that it is this way that I love you, or do you not care to know? Are you afraid that I shall love you too much?

Do you never realise how hard it is for me to part from you the evenings I have been with you? You must not think me a designing little person, for whom it is quite a usual thing to play tricks right under her parents' noses, and for whom it is

a special pleasure after she has been out enjoying her secret meetings to invent a new story with which to deceive her mother.

No, dearest, you must not think of me like that. Certainly there is nothing in the world I would not do to be able to come to you. I don't complain. I don't want you to think I consider my happiness too dearly bought. On the other hand I should not like you to think that I take it all too lightly.

Then there are the days between our meetings. Of course you are unable to understand that three or four days can be an eternity. You have so many things to interest you. Your work, your pleasures, your life is in a world where every hour of the day brings new nourishment, new material. But when I am away from you existence closes round me like prison walls, whose only warmth is my longing for you, whose only colouring is my memory of your brightness. But how should you be able to understand anything of all this. You, who only see a happy face come and go, who know nothing of the life which belongs to the happy face from the moment it nods a smiling farewell until it next laughs a joyful greeting to you.

But should your thoughts ever, when I am away from you, try to follow me, and had they the power to see through doors and walls, they would see the happy face changed into a picture of doleful misery. I don't know how it is, it may be wrong and ungrateful of me, but the first day's radiant happiness, which carried me over all worries

and shed a golden light on everything round me, has vanished, giving place to moodiness and fear, which only now and again changes into nervous merriment and the desire for excitement and noise around me. Never before has my own home seemed so poor, and cold, and grey, as when I return from playing the mistress of your house. As we sit eating our dinner in mournful dulness, there rises within me a sudden longing, a feeling of loneliness, and I have to bite my lips together to keep myself from bursting into tears.

But in the twilight, it is generally worst, when I sit huddled up in my corner of the window. Then the doubts come stealing out, pushing their clammy, rat-like snouts into my mind, Where is he now? Who is with him? Is he at a party with charming and fascinating women? Is he looking at them with love in his eyes, as when he bends over me? Is his voice gentle and bewitching as when he whispers to me? What am I to him now? Does he give me a thought, or does he in other arms forget his Julie?

I know, dear one, I have no right to ask for accounts; you have never promised me faithfulness, and I love you too much ever to ask it. We made no contract and no conditions when I gave myself to you, and of course I ought to have known that I was not the only one.

I don't ask for more now. Only I wish you to understand that I need you terribly, and that you must be good to me. I have to live for days on the

few hours' happiness with you. And should it happen, as it did last time, that you say something cold or teasing, the words freeze into my heart, and everything seems hopeless until I see you again.

If I should send you this letter you would be unable to hide your ironical smile. You would say I was a fool, and for the moment I should agree with you—because I always agree with you for the moment—but afterwards your smile would make me desperately miserable.

You only want me as a happy face, a diversion now and again. While I am so recklessly yours I can do nothing—know nothing—be nothing, without you.

That is the reason this letter stays in my diary.

JULIE.

3rd OF APRIL.

THAT which had to come has come. Erik and I have said good-bye to each other.

I am glad it is over, and that it happened so quietly and nicely. I feel it a relief; that I no longer have to dread Erik's astonished, inquiring, reproachful glances.

He had noticed that I was changing towards him. He felt that I was drifting further and further away from him,—without knowing why. I am glad that it is over. It was so hideous, it hurt me. It infuriated me to unjust hatred, made me act in a low and unworthy way.

When I was a half-grown girl I had a dog. I was capricious, and did not always treat it well, yet it loved me. One day it happened that when, in its usual way, it rubbed itself affectionately against me, I sent it roughly away. It slunk away to the corner by the fireplace, where it lay down with its head between its front paws. But every moment it looked at me, and suddenly it stood again in front of me, staring at me with eyes that seemed to say: Why do you treat me so harshly?

I remember there were days when these mute, accusing eyes aroused in me a perfect fury. I could have killed the dog. The same feeling I have had during the last few weeks for Erik. With what right did his eyes call me to account? What right had they to interfere with my mode of life like an accusing conscience?

But the worst and the most painful thing was, that every time of late we have met, Erik and I have been forced by curious fatality to speak of him. No matter what subject we started we always ended by discussing him. Every time Erik came I said to myself: to-day his name shall not be mentioned. Then we started talking heavily and laboriously, or with forced gaiety; we talked about wind and weather, about friends and acquaintances—*his* name sounded in my ears, *his* name stood in Erik's eyes, was on his lips. It was hopeless to flutter any longer; suddenly the name was mentioned, the flame had caught us. And once again the miserable comedy was played. Erik, who

understood nothing, and acted like a blind man, defended his friend, while I attacked him. No, it was quite unbearable. Fortunately it is all over now.

It happened this morning. Erik knew that to-day mother would go to church alone. I heard the bell ring. It was he.

He was pale, yet very hot, and sat wiping the perspiration from his face. We had exchanged some commonplaces, when he said (I sat by the window, he near the round table in the middle of the room), 'Do oblige me, Julie, by moving over here. I have something to talk to you about.'

'And can't you do that from a distance?'

'No, be a dear, and do as I ask you.' I sat down near him, and there was a pause. I believe we were both feeling equally ill at ease.

He took my hand, it was cold as ice, while his was moist and trembling. He looked at me seriously and tenderly, and said in a quiet voice, 'I have come, Julie, to ask you if you will be my wife?'

The question came so suddenly, and was so unexpected, that I could not immediately find an answer.

He continued: 'You see, I cannot stand this any longer. I have waited and waited because I did not dare to ask. It seemed to me that there was hope as long as I had no answer. But now I must have certainty. Whatever the answer is, it will be better for me than the suspense and anxiety of the past weeks. You must answer me quite frankly;

that, Julie, is the only thing I demand of you. Will you be my wife?'

I had regained my composure, and I answered as kindly as I could, but quite firmly. 'Did you really need to ask, Erik. I hardly think so. No, Erik, I cannot be your wife.'

He let my hand go, and sat some moments in deep thought before saying, 'But last winter, Julie, when I wrote that I was coming back?'

'Yes, Erik, then it was different.'

He stood up. 'Well, then it is as I thought. I won't ask. You owe me no explanations. Perhaps I even prefer to know nothing. And now, good-bye, little foster-sister. I hope you will be very happy.'

He bent over me and I felt his lips on my forehead, and while I sat there without moving, I heard the door bang after him.

Later, of course, I wept many bitter tears. Yet I felt relieved. It seemed to me as if a black cloud had rolled away from my sky, as if a heavy burden had fallen from my mind.

Erik has left. I shall no longer meet his sad eyes like an evil conscience. And I can again think of him with kindness and love. I have never seen him so handsome and manly as when he stood up to go, after having had his answer. No tears, no reproaches, no anger in his eyes, only a gentle, sad, understanding smile.

How far prouder and better men are than we women-folk.

4th OF APRIL.

THERE is a photograph standing amongst many others on his writing-table. I hate that photo. It represents a young woman with large dark eyes, which look as if they reflected a dream of love and kisses. I dare say they are very beautiful, but they make a horrid impression on me.

Every time I have been to see him, I have longed to ask him who she is. Yet I have never done it.

But to-night I suddenly found out. He had left the room, and I stood in front of his desk, looking at the photo. I did not know that he had come back, when I suddenly heard his voice behind saying: 'Don't you think she is very beautiful?'

'I suppose she is.'

'Do you not know her? She is the well-known Mrs. Paula Hansen.'

Then I was entertained with a long rigmarole about Mrs. Paula. It seemed as though he must go on speaking about her. He was an intimate friend of hers and of her husband's, and until lately he had been a constant visitor at their house. She was so dear and charming, so clever and amusing—I have never heard him admire anybody so much, and every moment he assured me that he was 'awfully fond of her.'

Suddenly in the midst of his rhapsodies he asked smilingly, 'Surely you are not jealous of Mrs. Hansen?'

'Why should you think that?'

'Oh, because I thought you suddenly became so quiet.'

Jealous, no I am not jealous—I will not be. But if he thinks it amuses me to hear him talk a whole evening about Mrs. P. H., he is very much mistaken.

In my opinion, she does not look a lady, and that expression in her eyes gives her something, well, what shall I call it, some air of the demi-monde.

7th OF APRIL.

TO-DAY I got into a terrible fix. The large veil which I generally carefully hide in my room, I left last night in the pocket of my cloak, which hangs in the hall.

When I came into the dining-room this morning, I saw it lying on a chair. Mother pointed to it and said: 'What have you used that for? Where did you find it?'

I felt I grew scarlet, but answered in a careless voice: 'I found it one day in the attic, and when it rained so badly last night, I . . . but,' I continued, as if with a sudden intuition, before mother had time to answer, 'if it is a sacred thing, which I ought not to have touched, I am very sorry.'

Mother looked quickly at me, and as she left the room said, 'No, certainly not, you are quite welcome to use it.'

Though ever since, I fancy, she has been a little worried.

8th OF APRIL.

IT must be either the spring which makes the men silly, or that happiness makes me different from what I have ever been before. To-day there were no less than eleven—eleven men that sent me glances. Yesterday there were five, which considering it was raining did not seem a bad number. I have never before had men looking at me like that in the street. It is something quite new to me, but probably it is part of all the other strange things that have happened. I admit frankly that it pleases me. Every man who looks admiringly at me, gives me new proof that he (the great and only one) is perhaps not lying to me when he says he thinks me lovely.

Evidently it amuses him too to hear of the little successes I have enjoyed. But when last time I told him that such a nice man had looked at me four days running, he said in an irritable voice, 'I do not like that; promise me never to look again in his direction.'

I wonder if he really meant it seriously. Is it possible that he is just a little jealous? How perfectly wonderful, how maddeningly delightful.

9th OF APRIL.

YES, I am happy, so happy that I become dissatisfied. But when I know that even the sun has spots, there is not much reason to grumble when now and again a cloud passes over my sky. I can think sensibly like that, when it is all over and the

sun is once more shining, But while the cloud is there, I am less heroic.

That which causes me most of my sad moments is his snail-like manner of disappearing into himself. It seems as though he is afraid of coming out too much, of mentally getting too close to me.

Suddenly as we sit happily and cosily together he disappears, and there is only left a reserved and guarded cavalier.

In these moments it seems as if a hundred miles lay between us. Our hands, which have clasped each other's warmly and firmly, slip limply down, and I don't recognise his face and voice any longer. I dream I am with my lover, I wake up to find by my side a stranger who talks to me with forced politeness.

If I dared only ask him why he is like that. Does he fear that I am intriguing against him. If it was not that I don't like even to hint at such a thing, I should say to him, 'You need not be afraid, I don't aspire to be your wife.'

On that point he can rest assured. I have thought it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that even should he propose it, I would refuse to marry him. It would be the greatest pity for us both. Freedom is for him an absolutely necessary condition of life, and I would suffer too much in feeling myself a drag on his foot. I dare not think of the time when it will all be over. When I think that every happy day that is given me is a step nearer that great, dark Nirvana then

my soul shudders with nameless terror. And yet he is right. Our love is not a vegetable to be used for household needs. Our love is a plant with lovely flowers and sweet scent. It dies quickly because its life has been too vivid.

Our love. Has he ever used the word? No, never, just as he has never said I love you. Of course I know that words are not everything. He can love me very dearly even though he does not say so, his protestations would be no proof, if they were all I had.

He calls me child. But when he takes my head in his hands, looks deep into my eyes and says, 'You darling child!' why will he not understand that the child is longing to hear the blessed words which in dreams and poems are promised to every loving child. I wonder is it caution which prevents you, my wise friend, from saying the words I—in joyful happiness—give you, whenever you wish. I wonder! for how can such caution be allied to what you told me last night. I stood in front of the mirror and saw behind me your glance, which rested on me with the utmost uncautious tenderness; and while you laid your arm round me, you said the curiously mysterious words, 'And there was a foam of white doves around her.' When I looked questioningly at you, you continued:—

'It is a poem which has sung within me from my childhood, and they are the words—there are no others—to a scene I once saw. It was a summer morning in the country, in a big yard bathed in

sunshine stood a young girl—never before had I seen anything so lovely—in a blue dress with a little basket in her hands. She took a handful of peas out of the basket, and at the same moment the air around her was like white foam. From all the buildings round the yard the doves flew towards her. They perched on her head, her shoulders, arms and hips, she seemed as though clothed in them. For my childish fancy it looked a fairyland picture. To me she was Princess Snowwhite herself. But since then the picture has shaped itself into a revelation of pure, frank, living virginity, and this revelation I hold to-day in my arms.'

I wonder if after telling me this you would have committed a great indiscretion by adding, 'I love you.' But if you are afraid of spoiling the child, and making her too conceited, why did you let your white doves foam about her?

11th OF APRIL.

I AM glad I was allowed to be with him for a short time to-night. To-morrow he is going to play a new part which has cost him much thought and study. So as not to interrupt him, I only stayed with him for an hour. He came straight from the dress rehearsal, and was in excellent spirits. The only one of his colleagues in whom he has confidence, and whose criticism he values, had congratulated him on his acting.

It is very seldom that he speaks of himself as an actor. But to-night I could feel he wished to open

his heart to some one, and I believe he was glad I was with him. I sat quietly and enjoyed him, enjoyed seeing this otherwise so self-controlled creature in such a whirl of excitement. Suddenly he looked at me and broke off in the middle of some passionate words, laughed and said, 'You looked quite alarmed, I suppose you think I have gone mad.' Shortly after he added, 'You see, I'll confess what I suppose you have already guessed, I am not at all such a cold-blooded fellow as I pretend to be. It is,' and he smiled, 'altogether a pose. In reality I am one of the most fanatical creatures alive, but I have realised that in every way one produces greater effect by allowing the volcano to be more suspected than seen, its hidden lava stream should heat the earth, but only occasionally surprise by a little eruption.' Again he grew serious. 'Perhaps, after all, I am not so calculating. But what does that matter. It is the lava stream which makes me an artist. It is that which ought to make me a better actor than the others who either rattle along to the full jingle of bells, or trundle along in respectable mediocrity, both being equally uninteresting, because both are lacking in the subtle, the mysterious and fascinating element which we call poetry.'

'You are not a wee bit conceited?' I asked—not so maliciously that he could not easily understand that in me at all events he had an admiring audience.

'Yes,' he answered, and knelt before me, 'I am

conceited—even very conceited. But do you know why? Because I have got you, it is you who have taught me to act my part well.'

'Then it is really I who ought to be conceited.'

'I am hoping that I shall make you feel so to-morrow night, or at any rate a little bit pleased.'

Of course I am going to the theatre to-morrow. Unfortunately I am going with Emmy, whose chatter is sure to ruin half my pleasure. But there is no other way. I did not dare to accept a ticket from him, so I got Emmy to invite me as a birthday present in advance.

12th OF APRIL.

TO-NIGHT so many different impressions passed through my mind, that I find it difficult to describe them.

I must start with the beginning. On the way to the theatre Emmy entertained me with stories about him and Mrs. Paula Hansen. Had I not heard that they are in love with each other? Everybody (Emma always speaks for everybody) talks about it.

I had made up my mind not to be influenced by Emmy's gossip. Just as Catholics, to keep evil thoughts away, say their rosaries, I continued to think of his face when he looks lovingly at me, and repeated to myself his dearest words. Yet I did not altogether escape the tempter. While Emmy dropped her poisonous words into my ears, doubt and despair triumphantly raised their heads in my

soul: What do you really know about him? You fool, who trust so implicitly in one you do not know? His face seemed to change in my thoughts, and grew stiff and cold. His words sounded mockingly. I heard him say with a malicious laugh, 'She is beautiful, isn't she?'

When we reached the theatre, I should have liked to have run away. To have run away from it all, from life which is so difficult to disentangle, from the people who make life still harder for each other.

I found myself sitting in the theatre in the midst of the buzzing crowd. I heard laughter and light chatter from people who had come there to kill a few hours, and to me it seemed revolting that he should give his art to this unintelligent, heartless mob.

Then I heard suddenly Emmy whisper, 'Here she is!' I followed the direction of her glance, and saw on the front row of the dress circle a lady whom I recognised from the photograph as Mrs. Paula Hansen.

Yes, she is beautiful. Not with regular beauty, but she has wonderful eyes, and there is a curious charm about her refined and graceful personality.

I don't know why, but I felt at once great sympathy for her. As she sat leaning back in her seat without noticing the people round her, there was an expression of thoughtful sadness about her which touched me.

I could not take my eyes off her. I felt a curious longing within me—a longing to know her, to go

up and kiss her, and say : ' Can't we be friends ; we two ? '

Then this feeling was dispelled by Emma whispering : ' Heaven knows how many women friends he has in the theatre to-night . . . ' The music started and everybody was silent. Now, in a moment, it would begin ; scarcely had the thought crossed my mind before a terror gripped my heart, and I felt as if I should faint. With moist hands I squeezed my handkerchief, and I answered Emmy's questions quite senselessly.

The curtain had risen. I saw figures moving about behind the footlights. I heard talking, and round me people laughing and clapping. I believe I laughed myself, but I don't know why. I sat like one paralysed.

Then suddenly it was as if some one called me. A veil fell from my eyes, a warm stream ran through my veins. He stood there on the stage and spoke. Was it hallucination ? Did I sit in his room, and was it to me he spoke ? I had to pinch my arm to be quite awake and understand that I was really in the theatre, and saw my own love-story being enacted ; heard all the melodies which had been softly murmured to me, intoned in rich beauty from the stage.

An involuntary shame and fear seized me. The blood shot up in my cheeks. I glanced at Emmy and at the other spectators to see if they had discovered anything.

Then I laughed off my silly fear, and sank back

into happy enjoyment. I was so glad and proud that the tears rolled down my cheeks; I forgot everybody and everything around me until the curtain fell. The lights were turned up. I heard the applause, and Emmy, who laughingly said: 'But what in the world are you howling for? I didn't see anything sad in it'; and she added, 'but I must say he played wonderfully,' which made Emmy go up in my respect.

In the entr'acte I looked up to Mrs. Paula's seat. She sat now glancing curiously about her, as if there was somebody she was specially looking for. Suddenly our eyes met, and I seemed to see a dark flash in hers. Later on during the evening I noticed several times that her opera-glasses were on me. I wonder does she know me? Does she suspect anything?—could he have—oh no, that is impossible. Yet her glances make me anxious, and during the last part of the performance I had a curious feeling of being watched.

Then the play was over and we stood in the hall getting our cloaks; I asked Emmy not to hurry too much, I wanted to wait as long as possible to catch some of the words of praise which people said about him. Everybody seemed astonished at his excellent acting, and I heard somebody say: 'Now his fortune is made, he has at last shown that he has great talent.'

Now. Why now? Only *I* knew the reason, and if you, my dearest one, had seen how high I held my head you would have had occasion to pinch my ear, and call me a conceited little goose.

As we were leaving the theatre we ran against Erik. He was radiant about his friend's success, and said: 'Now, I hope you admit that there is something in him after all.' He told me also that he was going away again very soon. At present he has given up all idea of starting for himself. Poor Erik.

Emmy wanted me to come with her and have a cup of tea, but I dreaded too much her expansive criticism of the play and the acting, so I left her and took the tram for home. When I had gone a little way, I got out again. I was suddenly seized by an irresistible desire to see him again to-night, just to see him and tell him that I loved him more than ever. Of course it was absurd to think I should find him at home. I went to his door, it was closed. There were no lights in his flat. For half an hour I walked about outside his house, then I was bound to go home.

But on my return home, all my conceit disappeared. I sat in the tram and had great difficulty to prevent myself from bursting into tears, while thinking that he was perhaps with her on this evening, which ought to have been totally and wholly mine.

I wonder, did he think of me; was it one of my flowers he wore in his button-hole as a special greeting to me.

I will believe it. I will not think of all Emmy told me.

He cannot possibly have been with her to-night. Even if it is not as Emmy says, it seems to me, that

to be with her to-night, would surely be sinning against me.

13th OF APRIL.

TO-DAY I bought all the papers. They are full of praise. In one of them they even speak of 'quite astonishing improvement.' Only one of the whole lot is not complimentary. They say 'that he was dull and impudent as usual,' and this time also drowned in affectation. I wonder what idiot writes for this paper. I should love to see him hacked into pieces and dished up as a 'terrible accident' in his own paper. But what does it matter what one absurd person writes when everybody else is enthusiastic. The play was done again last night, alas! I could not be in the theatre, but I was outside when the box-office opened—there was a big *queue*, and again after the performance—I stood in the hall, wearing my veil of course, and let people crush past me. I heard his name mentioned a hundred times, and I went home, saying it over to myself a thousand times before I fell asleep.

What have all the others been to him? Why have none of them been able to inspire him? If he has cared as much for any of them as he cares for me, why was it left for me to light the torch of his success?

I ask myself all these questions, but I dare not say aloud the answer, which sings in my soul like a hymn of victory.

I dare not for fear of deceiving myself, and yet, how is it possible there can be any other answer than the one which is jubilant within me. It is me he loves; I am the only one he has loved. The only one!

I fancy that men take love in a different way from we women. They can have scores of love-stories, but they mean very little; each one is like a passing wind which only for a moment ripples the surface of their being. But then suddenly comes the great love, which raises a storm in their souls—a storm which revolutionises and brings all that is deepest and best to the surface. Then they have strength and enthusiasm to achieve their life's great victory.

GOOD FRIDAY.

AT last I have seen him again. I meant to have said something really nice to him, something sincere and tender, to show my great joy in his success. But all I could get out was a dry, 'I congratulate you; you have had a great success.' He answered: 'Yes, I believe I was a success; now let me hear the only criticism that matters, the only one that is of value to me. What did you think? Was it good? Was it true? Did it awake memories in you? Did it touch you a little bit?'

I put my arms round his neck, looked all my joy into his eyes, and whispered: 'Thank you.' But afterwards I told him the same thing in many more words.

On his writing-table stood a bouquet of yellow roses. The moment I saw them I thought—those are from her.

I became a little depressed, and he noticed it. 'What is the matter?' he asked.

'Nothing.'

But shortly after I could not help saying: 'You have had flowers sent you. I suppose they are from——'

He interrupted me. 'Come, come, Julie, that is very naughty,' and he looked severely and quite sadly at me.

'Yes, I have every reason to be jealous, and you must tell me who sent you those flowers.'

I felt I was on the verge of tears and turned away my head. He took my hand, and at the same moment I burst into sobs. I tried to take away my hand, but he held it firmly, and went on holding it without a word till I stopped crying, then he said: 'Look here, little Julie. I have several times before told you that you had no reason to be jealous, and you have assured me that you never were. I see now that after all this is not quite true, so I am going to tell you a story which will prove to you how unreasonable is your jealousy, and knowing what a dear, sweet girl you are, I am sure you will believe what I am going to tell you, even if I don't mention names and details.'

'Before I met you, I had a dear woman friend,

who came to see me just as you are doing now. We were very fond of each other, and I am still very fond of her. You can listen to this without anger or bitterness, for between her and me everything is over. She is one of the best and sweetest women I have ever met. She has never done me anything but good, and during the long time she was my friend there was never a bitter word between us. Our friendship was bright, gay, and delightful; it will always live in my memory as a warm and cloudless summer day. Then I met you. You came, and very soon I was completely yours. You were conquering youth, intoxicating spring. It meant so much to you to become mine, that it made love seem something new and wonderful to me. You filled my life entirely. I found it impossible to divide my life between you and her. Many days had not passed after our first meeting before she instinctively felt there was danger ahead. I answered her questions evasively, and for the first time distrust shadowed our friendship. I was so little sure of myself and so fond of her that I dared not venture on any explanation, an explanation which I knew would end in parting. Then it happened that one evening you were here—perhaps you remember it is about three weeks ago. I had not seen her for a fortnight; I constantly found new excuses to avoid meeting her. Then that evening when we two were sitting together, the bell rang. I did not wish to answer the bell, but as it went on ringing I was obliged to go.

When, shortly after I returned, I told you it had been a messenger from the theatre, and when you noticed how serious I was, I added that the message had annoyed me. I even told you it was something about a part I did not want to act. There was no messenger, it was *she*. She came, driven by longing and suspicion. I persuaded her to go away by telling her a lie—a lie which I told too badly not to further arouse her suspicion. She went without a word, pretending to believe me, but as I did not ask her to come to see me during the next few days, she sent me a letter on the day that I was going to act my new part. A letter to say good-bye. A letter which, with all its bitter disappointment, was stamped with gentleness and refinement of thought. The preceding evening—you remember you paid me a little visit—she had been outside the house, and saw you coming and going. Well, it was this I wanted to tell you, and now judge for yourself if you have reason to be jealous. Even if the flowers are a greeting from her—a thing I don't know, for they were sent anonymously—do you really think it ought to cause you any uneasiness?'

This was his story; but long before it was finished I lay in his arms, asking him in my heart for forgiveness.

Yet, it was very unlucky that the evening she saw me I had gone out without my veil.

EASTER DAY, 17th OF APRIL.

I DO not in the least understand Papa. If it did not sound too ridiculous I should be tempted to think that the cross Professor Dry-fish had fallen a little bit in love with his own daughter.

But at any rate it is quite true that he has become much nicer to me. Every time he has looked at me during the last week, he has with praiseworthy efforts tried to pull his face into a smile, pinched my cheek, and in other ways had little jokes with me.

But the most wonderful thing happened yesterday. At lunch mother said that she had a bad cold and did not wish to go out. 'In that case,' said father, 'Julie will perhaps go with me to the exhibition.'

It was quite a little feast my gallant papa arranged for me. It was lovely weather, and father proposed that we should drive to town in an open cab. We spent about an hour at the exhibition, and father was very much occupied in introducing me to all the different artists we met. Afterwards we went into à Porta's restaurant, which father from old habit always calls 'Minnie's,' and there we drank port. While we sat dissipating in this way, father said suddenly: 'Do you know, Julie, it strikes me that your clothes need a little smartening up, and as I am rather flush just at present I think we will do a little shopping together, and try to make my little girl look nice for the summer.'

We went to draper and to milliner, to glover and

to shoemaker. Everywhere father made a terrible fuss before we found what he thought really suited me. Finally, he insisted on giving me two pairs of silk stockings, but when I remonstrated and said that mother would not like it, he gave up this extravagance.

In a really jolly mood we drove home. When we got into the hall, I said: 'Thank you so much, father dear, I have enjoyed myself immensely.' And he said, 'Now, am I not going to have a kiss for thanks?'

Which I gave him. But in the sitting-room the atmosphere was heavy and sad as usual, and mother lay on the sofa ill and depressed.

23rd OF APRIL (MY BIRTHDAY).

I HAVE turned the first corner. On this point I suppose I ought to philosophise in good old spinster fashion, and fill a couple of pages of my diary. But I am not the least bit in the mood for philosophy. What I most want to do is to dance and laugh, and laugh and dance, and wake the sleeping town with the glad tidings that there is one happy human creature in the world, that is to say this undersigned, this Julie, who has to-day, in spite of her great age, celebrated her birthday like a spoilt baby.

When I think of how my birthdays year after year have usually passed, I can hardly believe this one has been real. This is the usual birthday programme. The recipient of honours is awakened

by mama, who to be quite sure of striking the right note at once, has her eyes full of tears. 'Good morning, my darling child, and many happy returns of the day. Father and I give you material for a new summer frock, which you badly need, and grandmama has sent you money to pay for the making.' At lunch, a forced sense of gaiety prevails. During the afternoon I receive calls from Christiane, Emmy, and various aunts, who all bring charming gifts of home industry and a lot of silly chat, in return for which they receive a cup of sleep-producing chocolate. After this the festivities are really over, and the day closes with an extra tear-stained duet between the birthday child and her mother, who asks forgiveness for having brought her into this world full of misery.

But to-day the birthday music has had a different note. This was due, primarily, to the change in papa, who at lunch showed a joy of life and an extravagance about wine which made Frantz quite giddy and expansive, and even tempted mother to a liveliness which was almost funny, but which suited her charmingly; it was as if she were shy of her own gaiety.

In contradiction to his usual habits and to the bewilderment of the aunts, father honoured the chocolate feast by his presence, and by joking in quite unseemly fashion with his old relatives.

After this I dressed myself in my very best—officially to take part in a young folks' dinner at

Christiane's, in other words to celebrate my birthday with *him*.

He received me most solemnly in evening dress, offered me his arm, and led me into the sitting-room. In the midst of the room stood a white-covered birthday table, bending under the weight—to use a good newspaper phrase—of presents, lovely things for the toilets, sweets, and flowers.

He had on his word of honour promised not to give me anything. Now he stood behind and laughed over his lost honour and my half-feigned anger.

The birthday child had been allowed to choose her own dinner. He had forced me to choose several extravagant dishes by threatening me with chops and rice-pudding. On the whole he turns me into a horrid gourmand. He has for instance taught me that there is a difference in champagne. Before, I always thought that champagne was champagne, and that finished the question. While now I know that there is sweet and dry and extra dry, and that champagne is sometimes called Mumm, sometimes Heidseick, and heaps of other names; now I even know the kind I like best, which he says is a great progress in my education.

But one thing is certain, one should not despise good food and wine. There is great poetry in eating and drinking choice things. Even if I would be content to eat stewed cabbage with him, I cannot deny that I enjoyed very much his

delicious food, the prettily laid table, and our festive clothes.

When we had reached the ice, I asked him if he did not intend to make me a speech. He answered: 'The speech is in your bouquet.'

'Am I to be satisfied with a speech in flower-language?'

'Seek and thou shalt find.'

I took up the bouquet and out fell a piece of paper. He looked quite shy when he said: 'You have even made me attempt poetry. Though as a saving grace I must add, that I have not committed the crime of verse.'

I was going to open the paper, but he asked me to wait. I was not allowed to read the speech till we were having our coffee in the other room. He asked if I liked it. I answered him, what I really felt, that he was the most wonderful poet in the world.

Which I think he is, for he is *my* poet. As a finish to my report of the day, I place his speech in my diary.

THE SPEECH FOR JULIE.

'I need not tell you that I love you.

'You see that in my eyes when I hold you in my arms, you hear that in my voice when I kiss your ears.

'But I will tell you why you have so completely bewitched me. It is because you came to me like Eve, the mother of humanity, came to Adam, like

the newly-born woman in trembling expectation and promise, the amazing and the amazed.

'I can already see you, at these words, peep at me inquiringly, and a little confused. Just like that did Eve look at Adam when they met, and he for the first time let sky and earth hear those new and bewildering words: I love you.

'Just as you are now, bending your head and listening with something at the same time shy and radiant in your eyes, thus was Eve as a living young maiden before she encircled her loins with the sophisticated fig-leaves of experienced matronhood. . . . Look, the earth is wrapped in grey mist, and Adam is tired of the life which was given him.

'A sun-ray pierces the clouds and the mist is dispelled. There she stands, bringing sunshine and warmth; man's young bride, the woman, who blushes, not because she is ashamed of her own nakedness, but because she wonders and rejoices at her own power and grace, which she sees in Adam's adoring eyes.

'She glides towards him, surrounded by Cupids. They gambol in her hair, whisper little jokes into her eager ears. They curve her lips into a cupid's bow, they swing on her delicate bosom. One hides in the dimple on her cheek, another in the cleft of her chin. They sit in loving couples in her sweet eyes. You, my Eve, who called me to a new morn, who every time you enter my door seem to me to be the sun-ray which pierces the mist of all my grey thoughts.'

24th OF APRIL.

I AM glad I am twenty years old, for then I have known him two years, when I was nineteen and now that I am twenty. But such nonsense I don't tell him, for he would only laugh and call me a baby, and that would be most improper for a lady of twenty.

25th OF APRIL.

I WAS at home alone this afternoon. Suddenly I was startled out of myself by a violent ringing of the bell which made me tremble with fear.

The letter was for mother; I put it on the table and sat down again in the window. But I could not recover my peaceful frame of mind. The violent ringing still sounded in my ears, and seemed to say: There is danger ahead. I told myself I was silly and nervous, of course the postman had been in a hurry and pulled the bell too vigorously. I wondered from whom the letter could be; I did not know the handwriting. I went over and looked at it. It was an old-fashioned, long and narrow, envelope, and the writing wandered up and down in big, clumsy letters. There was a mistake in the spelling. Who in the world could it be from? I knew the handwriting on all the letters mother generally got.

I wonder, could it be from grandmother's old maid, saying that she was ill? No, that was not very likely, we should have had a message and not a letter.

But from whom could it be? Suddenly like a shriek the thought went through me; the letter is about me; it is an anonymous letter about me; I began to tremble again, so that I could hardly hold the letter in my icy cold hands. Of course that was what it was. It was quite obvious, the writing was disguised, and the sender had wilfully made a mistake in the spelling. Could it be from her? She had seen me go up to his flat? No, he said she was sweet and good. Still, when people are jealous, they often do things they would scorn at another time. Of course, it might be from lots of other people. How did I know that I had not been seen and recognised heaps of times when I visited him.

In that case I was lost. Mother would soon be back, find the letter and read it, and I should see her despairing eyes, see her sway and fall.

No, I must know what there was in that letter. I held it up against the light. I could see nothing. With a pin I tried to open it carefully. It was too firmly closed. Then I lost my senses completely, and I tore open the envelope, and with a sigh of deliverance, exhausted by anxiety, happy, but ashamed of myself, I sank into a chair with the terrible letter in my hand. It was an advertisement from a new laundry in the Old King's Road.

Now that it is over I can laugh. But, all the same, he little knows what a price I pay for my happiness.

1st OF MAY (SUNDAY).

THE most awful day in my life.

I ought to have gone to church with mother, but I paid grandmother a visit instead. On my way I passed his window. He was not up yet. The windows were still closed in his bedroom, and the curtains were drawn over one of them. I wished that I could have run up to him, shaken him and teased him, till he was wide awake.

It was a horrid cold spring morning with drizzle and fog. People hurried along to church, looking cross and hiding themselves in ugly rain-cloaks. They certainly looked as if they needed all the comfort their religion could give them, while in my heart there was Sabbath without church.

Grandmother, already in full trim, wearing her Sunday cap, sat propped up amongst her pillows. In the window sat old Marie with her knitting, reading the paper. How peaceful everything looked, like a quiet cosy convent church with incense and pot-pourri.

Grandmother patted my hand with her dry, wrinkled old hands. I could see in her eyes that a gift lay within them; but grandmother is not of the garrulous sort. She started: 'I don't think the weather is very nice to-day.' Then again, a little later, 'I should not think many people would go to the woods to-day.' At last, 'I wonder if Julie would like to go to the theatre to-night?' Of course Julie would like it very much, and she

knew also which theatre she would choose, for my play was on to-night.

'But have you not already seen that play?' asked grandmama.

'Yes, but I should simply love to see it again.'

'Another actor is playing in it to-night,' said Marie from the window. 'They say in the paper that Mörch is ill.'

I don't think I shrieked. I only remember that I stood with the paper near the window, that I suddenly heard Marie exclaim, 'But, good heavens, Miss!' that the room turned round with me, and that I heard grandmama's voice far away, saying, 'Poor child, poor child!' and that I found myself in the easy-chair, a basin with water at my side, while Marie held a smelling-bottle under my nose. I looked with astonished eyes from Marie to grandmama. What in the world had happened? At the same moment the memory and the terror came back to my mind, and if Marie had not had a firm grip of my arm, so that she hurt me, I think I should have fallen again.

My first thought was, 'What am I going to say to grandmama?' I pretended that I was only slowly coming back to consciousness, so that to regain time for reflection.

'Have you had anything to eat this morning?' she asked.

'No, grandmama.'

'I thought not. But that is very wrong of you, Julie. It is not good for young girls to go out

without a proper breakfast. Fetch a glass of wine, Marie.'

When we were alone grandmama called me to her. I knelt down in front of her, hid my head in her lap, bursting into tears. I tried to control myself, but I simply could not stop. Marie brought in the wine. I heard her come and go, but I went on sobbing, while grandmama softly stroked my hair. After all it was good to weep one's sorrow out, and blessedly comforting to feel grandmama's gentle hand on my head.

'Well, well, my dear child,' she repeated, while the weeping grew more quiet. But I still kept my head in her lap, not daring to meet her eyes. Yet the thought tortured me, that I had to get away, get to him to find out the truth.

Then grandmama said, and I shall never forget the unspeakable gentleness in her voice, 'You need not fear any question, darling. I am only an old woman, but I remember my youth, and I know that young hearts may have joys and sorrows which old hands should not touch. But should life—which God forbid—bring my little girl into some entanglement she cannot escape, as long as I am alive, she can always come to me. And now, get up, child, and run away, so as not to keep them waiting lunch for you. We need not say anything to father and mother about what has happened to-day, and the theatre ticket we will keep for another day. To-night it will be wiser for you to get early to bed.'

I stood outside his door. I had rushed through the streets, but now that I was here I dared not ring. As soon as I entered the house I seemed to feel the heavy air of a sick-room, and here, outside the door, a sweet, oppressive air crept over me with a curious, choking sensation. When I ring the bell the door will open, and pale and weeping the maid will stand before me. I shall not need to ask any questions. God in heaven, you could not, could not be so cruel. I began to pray, 'Our Father, which art in heaven . . .' No, no, not now—God will only be angry and punish me, because I, who never think of Him otherwise, come to Him out of sheer cowardice. I rang the bell; its muffled, soundless ringing startled me. Of course—I said to myself, I even think I smiled—of course they have tied something round the bell so that it shall not disturb him.

Steps sounded within, and the door was opened by a stranger, a tall, commanding-looking woman. She said—I think before I had asked—I suppose she guessed my errand. 'Mr. Mörch is very ill.' God be praised, he still lives! It was diphtheria, the lady explained, and he took ill the night before last. Only the day before I had been with him. The doctor said it was dangerous.

The lady looked as though, in her opinion, it was time for me to go.

I asked, though I knew it was hopeless, if I could be allowed to see him.

'No, Miss, that is quite impossible. The doctor

has forbidden all visitors. Besides, it is contagious.'

'I don't mind that at all. If you would just let me have a glimpse of him.'

The lady looked at me a little more kindly. 'I am sorry, but it's quite impossible. Perhaps the young lady is Mr. Mörch's fiancée?'

The blood rushed to my face as I answered, 'No.'

She looked astonished and asked, 'From whom shall I give a message?'

'From the young lady.'

'A young lady?'

'No, *the* young lady.'

I suppose she is now thinking the worst of me, but what does that matter if he only gets my greeting.

How I have lived through this day, how I have been able to control myself, so that no one has guessed anything, I don't know.

I only know that about five or six o'clock I couldn't bear to go on sitting ignorant at home. I went out—Heaven knows with what excuse—stood again outside the house, but did not dare to go up. I got hold of a messenger and sent him. The condition was unchanged; perhaps there was a very slight improvement.

This strange woman said I could not see him. She, to whom he is just a patient like all other

patients, she is allowed to be with him, to help him, nurse him ; every minute of the day she knows how he is, if there is improvement and hope. While I, who love him, I, who would not for a moment hesitate to give him my life, I must stand outside his door like one of the crowd and receive what information she, a hireling, is graciously pleased to give me. She bars the door to me, she does not even allow me to give him, my dearest and only one, a single glance.

And so powerless am I that I must obey this person, even be amiable to her to persuade her to give me the latest news.

I would gladly run away from everything here at home. Willingly bear the blame and the disgrace if I could be with him, sit near his bed, and fight with death for him. I have ransacked my heart, and I know I would do it without a moment's hesitation.

But I know also that he would never allow it. For he does not love me as I love him. His love is wise and prudent, and thinks of consequences ; his love knows exactly how far it should go ; it knows the frontier which it never intends to pass. But my love knows no goal but him, neither now nor in the future.

Therefore I must be wise and stay here ; here where I have nothing to do, where I am gasping like a fish on shore, because the air round me holds nothing of him. His name is never mentioned, and I can never even hear it. To no one can I tell my

fear, this fear which nearly kills me, because I keep it shut up within my own heart.

Stay here; talk to father and mother about indifferent things, while only one thought is in my mind—*him*; only one word on my lips—his name.

Stay here; sit quietly and nicely at meals and at work, while all my desire drags me to his bed.

To think that he could be ill and die, and that I should never hear of it, except through a notice in the papers. Die before I could say the last farewell, before I could give him a word or a glance.

So poverty-stricken, so lawless is my love, so miserable its conditions. In gloom and darkness it must creep along; never dare to step out into the daylight and demand its rights.

If you are taken from me in this night, my beloved, then as surely as my poor love is my only treasure I shall follow you.

But if to-morrow you wake up to life and health, if the day comes that I can again be with you, and you will tell me that you love me, then I will laugh at all my sorrows and confide to you my secret that I am richer than any one else in the world.

O God, that I may keep you!

2nd OF MAY.

THIS morning Christiane brought me the following letter addressed to her:

‘My dear little girl! Did it frighten you so terribly to read that I was ill! But what could

I do? I dared not write direct to you, and your friend's address I have only this moment learned from your letter. You dear child, who was so sorry and imagined that I was going to die and leave you. You have no reason to be afraid, firstly evil weeds never wither, and secondly because I have not yet the slightest intention of quitting life.

‘It is awfully dear of you to say that in spite of infection, family nonsense, etc., you would come to me. But the fever has not left me quite so stupid that I should dream of accepting such an offer. Besides, at the present moment I am anything but a charming sight; and to this add that I am therossest and most unamiable patient one can imagine. If you saw me just now, I am sure I should quite ruin the nice impression I otherwise may have made on you. Altogether I am of the opinion that sick people should not allow themselves to worry the healthy ones. They ought to hide themselves away with all the ugliness and the unappetising details of the sick-room.

‘As soon as I again feel myself fit for good society I will send you a message, and we will then take our revenge for this long parting.

‘I promise you that the desire of seeing you again will quickly make me well, and that, in spite of wild fever dreams, I will be faithful to you.

‘I force all hideous fever dreams away by thinking of you, and during the night it seems to me you are standing near my bed, holding your dear cool

hand on my burning forehead. Thus you are—though far away—my nurse and my healer.

‘Forgive this short letter, but the least exertion makes my weak head giddy. I don’t send you any kisses, for even in my thoughts my sickness must not touch your young health and beauty. I understand so well the leper, who watched in wonderment a beautiful woman pass by, and then with humble adoration kissed the mark of her footsteps in the dust.—Yours, A.’

He loves flowers. Unfortunately the state of my finances does not permit a very great extravagance. But even if I have to dig the money out of the pavement, he shall, every day until we meet again, have some choice flowers from me.

To-day a black-red rose amongst red crocuses. Which means, all my thoughts are circling like foam of white doves round you, my splendid dark-eyed Sheik.

3rd OF MAY.

A HANDFUL of gigantic mignonettes and some forget-me-nots: I come to you without splendour, but I give you my love strong and passionate like the scent of the mignonette. I give you my trusting faithfulness like the child-eyed-flower of the forget-me-not.

4th OF MAY.

VIOLETS and white moss-roses: My love grows in secret, yet, it is blue like the summer sky, white like the winter snow.

5th OF MAY.

ORCHIDS and young beech leaves: In the sombre atmosphere of the home, far from sunshine and reality, my soul shaped itself into a flower pale and strange. Then you came and beyond all the weeds and undergrowths of the wood, my soul ascended joyfully with spring's glad tidings.

6th OF MAY.

A SMOKE yellow rose, a wallflower, yellow anemones! Do you reproach me that I am jealous? Don't you understand that my jealousy is like a burning flame, encircling my love with a radiant halo.

7th OF MAY.

TWO blush-roses and (what is a great rarity at this time of the year) two pink carnations, equally beautiful, each the other's complement in colouring and scent, though so different, they commingle in an unrivalled meeting of love. Like the rose and the carnation here meet in an intoxicating kiss, thus my beloved, I shall soon be again in your arms.

8th OF MAY.

I HAVE been very horrid, and it would serve me right, if he had been angry with me. Yes, I wish he had been angry, I would rather he had hurt me, than looked at me with his tired, indulgent smile.

I don't know how it happened, but from the very

beginning we struck a false note, and we got more and more out of tune as the evening went on. Perhaps it was that I had been looking forward to our meeting, and had imagined it was going to be something quite wonderful. From the moment when I crept up the backstairs, so that the nurse should not see me, and was steered into his room and met his glance, which though kind was weak and not radiant as I had imagined, I was so childishly disappointed that I was unable to say the words which filled my heart. Instead I only found words so strange and unnatural that they even grated on my own ears. There was no scene between us, he only looked surprised at me, and we continued to talk ; but while the real harmony became more and more remote, his face grew nervous with a tortured and tired expression. At last he lay with half-closed eyes, now and again wiping his forehead with his pocket-handkerchief.

How could I have resisted falling on my knees by his bed, begging his forgiveness. But instead of that I said in an offended voice : ' I am sure you prefer me to go. Of course I don't want to tire you.'

He lay a moment without answer. Then in his most polite and correct voice, the one I call his best society voice, which always seems to push me a hundred miles away, he said, ' Do excuse me for not being very entertaining, but I am not yet fit for society, and I am afraid I ought to rest now.'

It was the first time we parted without arranging a new meeting. I absolutely hated him when he smilingly gave me his hand to say good-bye, letting me go without telling me that I was the silliest and most spoiled girl in the world, and that I deserved to be whipped like a naughty child.

Now I am here alone with my misery. The day to which I had looked forward as to no other has been ruined. What in the world is he thinking of me? A thoughtless, selfish girl, who is offended because she does not find him as well as she expected.

9th OF MAY.

HOW good and how wise he is.

A letter from him has crossed the letter I at once wrote him.

He writes: 'I was not so very well, when you came yesterday, and therefore, my little girl did not get the reception she ought to have had, and that also prevented me from thanking her for all her love during this time and always. I am, as I have told you before, a most disagreeable patient. All the same, I wonder if you can manage it, will you come and see me to-morrow, and please try to be a little indulgent with me, even if I should not quite have got the better of my nerves.'

14th OF MAY.

HE is almost well. For the last few days he has been out of bed, and yesterday he went out for a drive.

I see him every day either in the morning or the evening. To do this, I have invented a young girl whom I meet at Christiane's, and whom I am teaching to paint on china. Every day I am amazed I am not found out, and I am getting quite reckless and go to his flat without the slightest hesitation even in broad daylight.

But I know that should the day come that I am found out, and they forbid me to see him, I shall leave home. About that I have quite made up my mind, that is irrevocable. Then let come what may. I have said nothing to him about this, yet it is he who has given me the courage to take so decided a resolution. For during these last days, it has become more clear to me that after all his love for me is not a mere passing fancy. I am trying to make myself useful to him, and I believe I have succeeded and that he is beginning to miss me when I am not there. I go errands for him, read to him, and write letters at his dictation. He calls me his private secretary, and discusses all his affairs with me.

In reality we are just like man and wife. I come and go as if his flat were my own. I look after his flowers, and when I am not reading to him or have other work to do, I sew initials on his table linen. Even his old maid has got into the habit of asking my advice about what to give him for dinner—for monsieur is rather difficult to please.

He is on the whole, I think, what one calls an egoist. As a bachelor, he is accustomed to have

the whole household working for his comfort, and he takes it as the most natural thing in the world, that I, as well as the maid, think only of waiting on him and giving him pleasure. But it suits him to be a turk and he is the most amiable tyrant. When he is resting in languorous convalescence on the couch, and I bring now one thing and now another, for which he gratefully thanks me, kissing my hand, it would not matter what his command would be, I should, without the slightest hesitation, obey it.

20th OF MAY.

I HAVE travelled with him to fairy-tale land, which is only a two hours' journey from the old statue in the King's Square. I don't know the real name of the place, and in regard to its position, I can only say that one starts driving along the King's Road, and in a couple of hours one is there. But on the other hand I know exactly what it looks like. A white, thatched cottage, on the outskirts of the forest on the edge of the lake. The entrance to the house is from the wood through a big open verandah covered with virginia creeper, and in the gable and facing the lake is a balcony of green painted wood. An old peasant woman stands in the verandah courtesying. During the day the sun shines from a cloudless sky, and at night it is full moon. Across the lake, in the moonlight, glides a white boat, from which comes faint singing of young voices.

I have been with him in fairy-tale land, seen the sun set and the moon rise, seen the sun rise again and sink behind the woods, lighting with its glow the windows of the white village. But to me it seems that the twenty-four hours is a whole lifetime, where I have lived with him in a world created just for us two, furnished with all nature's loveliest gifts, and with a dear old peasant woman-fairy to do our bidding.

I pinch my arm to be sure I am not dreaming. No, it is no dream. On the table in front of me stands the bouquet of wild flowers the old woman gave me when we left, and near my bed are my boots with the marks of field and wood on them.

It happened like this: The day before yesterday father and mother went to Sorö to visit an old aunt, who yesterday was eighty years of age, and her son, who is master of the large public school there. They return to-morrow. When he heard of this, he said, 'Then we will also go for a journey.' Though at first I thought it was quite impossible and took it as a joke, it grew all the same into reality. After all, I philosophised, if the worst comes to the worst I can only be found out. I got Christiane to send me an invitation for a picnic to-day, with a preliminary visit to her home overnight, so that we, like eager young girls, might start with the dawn. To this arrangement the parents gave their consent and went off to the birthday in Sorö.

But yesterday afternoon, at six o'clock, two young

girls trotted along the King's Road. Near the inn they were overtaken by a closed carriage. It stopped, the door opened, one of the young girls disappeared within, and off again rolled the carriage.

While Christiane turned back, preparing for a day of seclusion, for I had absolutely forbidden her to show her pretty face in the streets of Copenhagen—he and I drove on to fairyland. My question of whither and wherefore he had answered with these words: ‘Do not worry about anything, just meet me as you stand near the inn. I will come with a carriage, bring with me everything you are likely to need, and I will carry you away to a remote and very little-known country inn, where an old woman serves hot water to picnic parties, and occasionally, for fair words and money, is ready to prepare a simple country meal and a clean night's lodging.’

When I had got safely into the carriage and recovered my nerve a little, I could not help laughing at noticing the amount of luggage with which we started. He explained that there was really no more than what we absolutely needed. ‘In the one bag are your things; in the other mine. In the basket is the wine, and in the holdall a pillow for you and some sheets in case those they give us are not properly aired. I trust that you will find all there ought to be.’ There was indeed, and more besides.

To be quite safe he pulled the curtain over the window. I thought it wonderful to sit like that,

without knowing whither we drove, dreaming that he and I were starting on a fairy-trip out into the wide world.

Then we reached fairyland.

The old woman stood in the verandah and courtesied her welcome. She wore a gold-embroidered cap, and a skirt of stiff green homespun. She was a buxom, cosy, motherly person, and called me 'madam.'

Our luggage was carried in, and the coachman had orders to return next evening at eight o'clock. We went for a walk along the lake till dinner was ready.

The sun was just sinking. We saw the big ball of fire disappear between the trees, and watched the illumination of the sky. The beach leaves shone like newly-minted coins, and over the lake the fading sunlight rippled like mother-o'-pearl. We stood watching first the glowing forest, then the shining lake. From the other side of the lake sounded the chimes of church bells curiously near, and yet solemnly far away. From the undergrowth came sleepy twitters. No other sounds. We stood close to each other, cheek against cheek, silent, fascinated, happy.

The ball of the sun had disappeared. The fire in the clouds died away, a pale mist blotted out the colours of the lake.

Then we heard a voice calling from the cottage, and we went in—went in to continue the fairy-tale inside the old fairy's wood-hut.

I only remember that the room was papered in blue, and that it had a sanded floor; that in the middle of the room stood a table with a coarse, but shining, linen cloth, and on the table two three-armed silver candelabras, which gave to the simple room a touch of mysterious richness and distinction.

And the food! How good it smelt; how deliciously it tasted, and what good appetites we had. Everything tasted as if it came straight from Nature's kitchen, the pink ham and the parsley-stuffed chicken, as well as the yellow soufflet with its sugar-powdered brown crust!

We were happy and unconcerned as children, and the old woman fussed about, while she chatted with us, saying how delighted she was to see such happy young people in her house.

When we had reached the coffee, the woman asked if 'madam' would not like to make it herself. I went with her into the kitchen, but had to call him out at once so that he could admire all the beautiful old copper things. On one shelf stood an entire regiment of red tea-urns, some short and fat, others slender and elegant, with spouts like top-hats.

Then it was ten o'clock, and, after country fashion, we went to bed.

While he sat smoking his cigar, the old woman led me up a creaking staircase to the 'guest-room.' It was large, with low ceiling, and perfumed with violets and cleanliness. The furniture consisted only of a washstand, some chairs and a table, and

the bed. But the bed was a piece of splendour . . . dark, thick mahogany, with brass balls and ornaments. It was heavy, large, and monumental, and a canopy of faded brocade was draped above it. With pride the woman told me that her late husband had bought it at the auction of the belongings of the old princess. She lit the candles, bade me good-night, and went away.

I began to undress. I sat in front of the mirror in the dressing-gown he had brought. Through the balcony door a moonbeam crept in across the room. I stood up, opened the door—the evening was mild as at midsummer—and went out. Never have I seen anything more beautiful. Like a shiny silver mirror the lake was set in a frame of white mist, which now and again broke for a moment to unveil fantastic landscapes with vividly lit trees.

I heard a door open, but I did not turn. I felt he was just behind me. I stood in joyful expectation, breathing quick drafts of balmy air.

His arm stole round my waist, his lips touched my ear, and, like a breath of the summer night, his voice whispered, 'My dear little wife!'

In the same moment the song sounded again from the lake, 'Peace falls o'er land and town,' and out of the mist comes a boat, leaving behind it a golden streak.

I woke with the feeling that some great pleasure was in store for me, and my eyes were filled with sunshine. What is it? Where am I? I asked

myself, and blinked my eyes to be wide awake. Then I saw him sitting in his shirt sleeves by the little table in front of the balcony door, serious, and deeply occupied in shaving. For a little while I lay quietly enjoying this precious sight. He made the most miserable faces, and handled the razor in dangerous fashion. If he only knew that I am here spying on him, after he, poor man, out of sheer vanity, has got up at an unearthly hour that I should not see him in an unshaven condition. Ugh! there he's cut himself. I laughed so that I shook the bed. He turned, and, like a gutter-snipe, put out his tongue, and said: 'Yes, you just wait till I have finished, and I will give you something to laugh at, you naughty girl.'

Shortly after he came to the bed, pulled my nose, threatened me with a wet sponge, and was quite beside himself with merriment, with smooth, though not unwounded, cheeks.

The second day of our journey had begun. Alas! too soon it ended.

How did we spend it? As the royal children we were, playing together in our kingdom, which, because it was ours, seemed the most beautiful in the world. We ate the food, drank the wine, which seemed better and more delicious than all other earthly food and wine, and we were so in love with each other, that we thought our earlier life counted for nothing. It happened to-day, and yet it is already wrapt in the faint radiance of old memory. I remember our sitting down near the lake having

breakfast — new-laid eggs, fresh sourish peasant cheese and milk with thick cream. I remember our standing with the old woman in the yard, feeding the chickens and hens, and the gallant self-consciously modest rooster. I remember our sauntering through the wood, and my fear at seeing in a tree an owl, which, like an old witch, glared at me with her day-blind eyes.

I remember at last our parting from fairy-tale land, when the carriage drove away from the verandah, and the old woman handed me the sweet flowers and said: 'God's peace and farewell, little lady, and come again soon.'

Then we drove back to reality and to the big town, where there are parents, and sin, and sorrow, and evil consciences.

When the first tall houses came in sight a horrible fear clutched my heart, and when we met a removing van I thought of the summer holidays, which very soon would part him and me.

But when he saw that I was sad, he asked: 'Is anything worrying you?' Then I smiled, put both my arms round his neck, looked into his eyes and said: 'Let me tell you to-day how much sadder it is for me to part from you than ever before; let me tell you now that perhaps there will be much I may have to regret in my life, but never—do you hear—never shall I regret that I have been yours.'

21st OF MAY.

WHEN I woke up this morning I seemed still to have my ears full of the ringing of bells, and in vain I tried to remember what I had been dreaming.

The dream itself had quite disappeared from my mind, only leaving behind this sound of merry bells, which pursued me all day long in a curious, irritating way. Like a teasing play of hobgoblins they intermingled with all my thoughts.

Then, during the afternoon, as I sat dreaming of my journey to fairyland, dreaming all over again that I was driving with him to the old peasant woman's cottage, the bells started again their gay ringing; they sounded in time with the clattering of horses' hoofs, and lo and behold, suddenly the picture in my fancy changed, the landscape turned white and wintry, the carriage became a sleigh, and in the sleigh sat he and I with heavy fur-coats over our wedding garments, hurrying from the big dinner-party out to the isolated country inn, where we were to celebrate our wedding-feast, he and I alone.

But from the wintry sky I seemed to see grand-mama's beautiful eyes look down to me, so gently and smilingly, while the bells ring through the air, 'Now is your time, now is your time.'

22nd OF MAY.

TO-DAY fortnight he leaves town. He is going to Vedbaek to stay with a friend.

Of course it is quite natural; he needs the

peace of the country, and not for a moment could I imagine that he should stay in town for my sake. He knows that quite well, and has therefore not thought it necessary to give me any explanation on this subject. Yet I should have been happier if he had talked it over with me, giving me the occasion to tell him that the very thing I like him to do is to get quite well and strong in the country.

26th OF MAY.

WE have walked through the streets for the first time together. I had said to him that to-night I was going to have a look at the festive decorations in his company. He frowned a little, and asked if it was wise. I answered him I did not care in the least. I insisted on seeing all the fun with him, even if it should appear in the papers afterwards.

But I really don't think a human soul noticed us. There was such a crush, and such a feeling of jolly good fellowship reigned that the usual mean criticism was forgotten. Besides it would have been useless to demand introduction and visiting-cards from all the arms and legs with which one came in contact during the evening. To begin with, he was not very bright, and every time he recognised a familiar face he tried to disappear with me down streets which were not illuminated. But gradually also he was seized by the general feeling of belonging to one huge Noah's ark, and

quite recklessly we finished up arm-in-arm watching the fireworks at Tivoli's.

30th OF MAY.

THERE have been days in which he seems rather tired and depressed. When I have said to him, that I thought he was tired of seeing so much of me, he has always answered that it was silly nonsense. He admitted there were days, when he felt nervous, without courage and without spirit, and that it was impolite (a word I simply hate) of him to let me feel it, but that my visits were only an encouragement and a pleasure to him. I must not be angry because he was not always able to control his bad moods, which were partly due to his unamiable character, partly to worries, in which I had no part.

I implored him to be more frank with me. I would only be too happy to share his sorrows, and surely he ought to know that there was not a thing in the world, I would not do if in any way I could help him.

But when I say such things, he takes me on his knee, pets me, and says that I really must not take his sulkiness so seriously. It does not mean anything after all, and it would be better for me to pretend not to notice it.

But now I know what worries him ; it is money.

Yesterday, as well as to-day, I felt that he was very depressed and anxious. When I came yesterday, he said : ' Don't be angry if I ask you not to

stay very long, but I am expecting a man with whom I must have a business talk.' Now knowing how much it meant, I fear I was rather unreasonable. It had never happened before that he asked me to leave; I thought it horrid of him, and felt vague fears creeping over me.

I had not recovered when I came to-day and grew still more unhappy, when I found that he was still in the same bad humour.

We had an extremely agreeable half hour, in which the storm gathered about us, his face grew more and more stiff, and I more and more ready for tears.

At last the storm burst, when after a lengthy pause he said in his coldest voice: 'I must say, this promises to be very jolly.'

The same moment he had said it, I burst into sobs, and he was by my side, begging my forgiveness in the most tender words. 'Yes, but why are you so horrid to me, what have I done to you? Are you tired of me?'

'No, Julie, indeed I am not tired of you, but I am so worried.'

'And you won't tell me the reason? Why mayn't I know what worries you, since I am not the cause.'

Then he told me everything. Before he left town, he had to pay a large sum of money, which he owed, and he did not know how to get it. When in an astonished voice I said, that I thought he was rich, he answered that everybody thought so,

but that it was a great mistake. He certainly had a little money, but it was invested in such a way, that he could not touch the capital, and during the last years he had lived rather extravagantly.

‘But if it is impossible for you to get the money, what then?’

‘Well, darling, then it is pretty bad, but don’t you worry. I shall get the money somehow. Only it is very disagreeable while it lasts.’

We were now sitting together on the sofa, talking the matter over in a wise way, and I was soon quite happy again. It seemed to me he was nearer to me than ever before, now that he had confided to me all these intimate worries.

But when I said to him: ‘You will do me a great service, if for the future you will stop spending so much for my sake, I don’t care either for presents or for fine dinners,’ he kissed me and said smilingly: ‘It is very dear of you to say that, but you must not think for a moment that you have ruined me. No, dear child, the little you and I have spent would neither make nor mar my fortune.’

Shortly after, when he offered me a glass of wine, he added, ‘if you think I can allow myself so mad an extravagance.’

4th OF JUNE.

I HAVE seen very little of him during the last few days. He has been busy with his affairs, and besides had to pay a great many calls.

I have been patient and tried to take my fate

calmly. Even when yesterday I went to him in vain and instead of himself only found a few excusing words, I took it bravely.

But when I realise that very soon I shall see him only at rare intervals, then I dare not think further ahead, I simply bend my head, close my eyes, and know that everything is hopeless.

He has not mentioned his money affairs again. I asked him the other day how he was getting on, but he passed it lightly over, saying that it was sure to be all right.

30th OF JUNE.

HE is gone. I was with him during the last hours; I lunched with him and helped him to pack. On my way to him, I gave myself the following little lecture: 'Now be good, show him a bright and gay face, so that he can take with him a charming memory of you, and above all he must not, at any price, get the impression that you had expected him to stay in town for your sake.'

I found him busily occupied and in high spirits. He chatted incessantly while he wrote letters, and flew from room to room collecting things he suddenly remembered he wanted to take with him.

He was quite changed. There was a curious feverish restlessness about him, and every moment he looked at his watch as if he feared he would be too late.

We hurried through lunch. I had no appetite. He took some few mouthfuls, drank three or four glasses of madeira, one after another, and said : ' Now we must pack.'

In the bedroom everything was upside down. On the bed and on the chairs lay clothes, boots, cigar-boxes, books, shirts, and ties. On the floor stood his trunks ; the drawers were all pulled out in the dressing-table, and the wardrobe-doors stood wide open.

I started packing. Then he remembered that he had forgotten to buy writing paper, asked me to excuse him for a moment, and went out.

I stood in the room, where every corner spoke of preparation for travel, and a desolate sense of misery crept over me. Mechanically I took the clothes, I folded them piece by piece, and laid them in the big trunk. I bent down, I stood up, down and up, down and up, piece after piece I packed, now this, now that, in a short time it would all be over and I should be alone, alone.

I stood up terrified. No, no, I will not, I dare not be alone. He must not leave, I will beg and pray him to stay, and I am sure he will do as I ask. He won't have the heart to leave me. It would be cruel of him, and he has no right to treat me like that.

Then I heard the door bang ; he came singing into the sitting-room, and when he came in to me, I was again busily packing.

' How clever you are,' he said, and stroked my

hair. 'Never before have I had such a beautifully packed trunk.'

He stood close to me, handing me the things, nodding and smiling to me.

Suddenly I said: 'If I were to beg you to stay, would you give up this journey?'

He looked at me in amazement, thought for a moment, and said: 'Do you mean it?'

'Well, if I did mean it?'

Another inquiring glance, another reflection and then: 'I should stay—of course.'

I had got the answer I wanted. Yet it did not make me happy. We stood looking at each other, then he came up to me, put his arm round my waist and said, in the most gentle and tender way, that he would stay with the greatest pleasure, and that it would not be the slightest sacrifice on his part to give up this trip. After which I of course said, I had only meant it in fun.

The packing was not finished until the last moment. The cab was already waiting. He was anxious not to be late, and we said a hurried good-bye to each other. I stood hidden behind the curtain, peeping down into the street. He caught sight of me, waved his hand and swung his hat. He looked so handsome and so radiant, just as if he was starting out to meet victory and happiness.

The cab turned the corner, and I let the curtain fall. I walked through the rooms, could not tear myself away from them. I sat down on the couch, where I usually sat with him. On the table in

front of me lay his album. I opened it and found in it a picture of him as a little boy of six. I took it out, playing with it like a little girl plays with a doll. I laid it on my heart, I kissed it, and called it tender names, and while the tears were running from my silly eyes, blotting out the picture, I said, that now we two had to keep close together, now he had left us.

I sat there until the maid came in, and in astonishment said: 'Good heavens, miss, are you still here.'

I was also astonished at her sudden entrance. I got up quickly and left, but the little picture I put in my pocket.

7th OF JUNE.

THIS morning I went to the post-office and fetched the following *poste-restante* letter:—

'VEDBAEK, 6th OF JUNE.

'DEAREST CHILD,—Do you know that you spoil me, and that I have not in the least deserved it. When on my arrival I was received by your dear, far too dear, letter it made me both happy and ashamed. I am—and this is no phrase—quite unable to return your goodness. I am especially a very poor letter-writer, while you, like so many women, are a master in the art of sending yourself in an envelope. I assure you that when I opened your letter, it was exactly as if my Julie sprang alive out into the room, threw her arms round my neck and told me a lot of delightful things.

'I promise you I will write very often, but I am afraid you must be satisfied with short notes. The country laziness has already taken hold of my brain, so that I have to drive myself to make and spell a correct phrase. The only thing my brain is able to express quickly is that I am very much in love with you, and am longing for the 15th, when I have to pay a visit to town on business.

'We live in a cottage, hardly as tall as we are, but the situation is perfect, just on the outskirts of the wood, and the cottage owns a collection of pictures of heavenly and earthly celebrities, which, together with fresh milk, pigstye, and seaweed perfume, and bedtime at ten o'clock, purifies my soul to a state of open-mouthed childishness. Therefore, without blushing, I finish this letter in the true style of the usual love epistle. With love and a thousand kisses to my beloved darling.—
From her ever devoted, A.'

9th OF JUNE.

IT has happened before that I have not seen him for a whole week. Why then does this week's parting seem so bitter?

In an hour and a half I can get to him. If to-day I write that I cannot bear the parting any longer, I know he will come to-morrow.

Yet, it is not the same.

Before, when I walked through the streets, I knew that I might meet him at any moment. I read his name on the theatre posters. I passed

his window, and could imagine him sitting within. For every step I took, I felt him near me, and even if I did not meet him I knew he was in the very air I breathed. While now, I am like a traveller in a strange town. Aimlessly I walk about, knowing that I shall not find what I am seeking. I find myself standing outside the theatre, studying the old torn posters, and in whichever direction I start I always end by finding myself outside his house, where the windows of his flat are blinded like on the day of a funeral.

Every day has two bright moments. When I fetch his letter and when I write mine. I am happiest when I write to him, for *his* letters are not him, they are only the surface of him, they bear the stamp of his reserve, his dread of letting himself go, very likely also what he himself calls 'country-laziness.'

But when I—after the others have gone to bed—am sitting in my little room, filling sheet after sheet to him, then I can feel him so near that it is as if I lay in his arms talking to him. The air round me is warm with his presence. While I sit with bent head I feel his kiss on my neck, and my pen dances along, keeping time with my heart's quick beat.

14th OF JUNE.

A FEW days ago I went to his flat, and I have since been there every day. I have both laughed and cried at myself, but I felt I had to go. When I am in his room I imagine that he has just

left me, that he has gone out on some errand and will be back very soon.

I spend about an hour there every day, going on with my work, embroidering his linen, and chatting to the maid.

To-day we have been busy preparing a festive reception for him. We have dusted and polished; and everything is spick and span. We have put fresh flowers and foliage in all the vases, and I have decided what he is to have for lunch.

The last thing I did before I left the place was to write him a welcoming note, which he will find on his writing-table.

Therefore, come to me, beloved, the bridal house is garnished, and your bride awaits you. Your bride who has no other wish in her heart than to be yours, and to do your bidding.

15th OF JUNE.

I THINK he was really happy to see me again, he was so dear to me.

But there is one thing I don't understand. Why should he for a moment seem out of tune when I showed him how busy I had been with the table linen.

I asked him if he did not like my coming to the flat when he was away, and he answered: 'No, it isn't that, but—well, dear, you really are too good to me, and I don't deserve it at all.'

Which, of course, I think is quite silly, for he ought to know that I have no greater pleasure

than to work for him. It seems to me so absolutely natural. Then why should he say, 'You are too good for me,' as if goodness has anything to do with it? When I had explained this, he drew me close to him and said, half smilingly, half seriously, 'Would it be possible for you to love me a little less?' 'What a curious thing for a lover to ask,' I answered.

'It is sheer modesty all the same,' he continued. 'I think you give me so much, and I give you so very little.'

'You are (kiss) a silly billy. You are (kiss) grumpy and spoiled, sometimes even a tease and a pig. Yet, you are (kiss) the most wonderful person in the world, and (kiss, kiss, kiss) I love you with all my heart.' After which he forgot his objections to my too great love.

7th OF JULY.

I NEGLECT my diary for my correspondence. To him, I have a thousand things to write, while there is nothing particularly interesting to put into my diary. Like the mile-stones on a country road the days glide uniformly by. Only the Saturdays stand out from the dulness. The Saturdays are like cosy inns on my long summer road, for every Saturday he comes to town to meet me.

Thus week after week I trot along the same monotonous road. Sunday is still radiant from Saturday's sun, but Monday and Tuesday are marked by the signs of hopelessness. At Wednes-

day's milestone the light of expectancy is shimmering ahead: in growing hope and longing I pass Thursday and Friday, until Saturday's happiness shines through the night's dreams and I wake with joy in my heart.

But when on his staircase, a fear takes hold of me. How will he receive me? Will his face be bright with welcome, or will it have the expression of effort and fatigue which now and again I seem to have noticed, which perhaps is only my imagination, but which, when I am alone, sometimes stands out in my memory and fills my soul with black, foreboding clouds.

The fear cripples my joy and prevents me from being as nice and bright as I should like to. Then he often misunderstands me; I see the nervous glint in his eye, and I am sure he thinks me irritating and capricious.

But he says nothing. He drinks quickly a lot of wine, and persuades me to drink too.

Of course wine helps. A cosy well-being creeps over mind and body. All dark and gloomy thoughts disappear like mist before the sun; the silly fear vanishes, it sets the tongue moving, one feels nearer to each other, and when one sits hand in hand looking into each other's eyes, there is no longer any nervous tension, no mistake, and no suspicion, and one forgets the six other days of the week for this blessed happiness of the seventh.

Afterwards I cross-examine him. He must give

me a detailed description of everything and everybody during the past days. In the beginning he assures me there was nothing to tell. His days were taken up with bathing, lazing, smoking, eating, and sleeping. But gradually I have extorted from him the fact that, on the whole, he leads quite a gay life. At the hotel where he dines he has made many friends, he plays croquet and tennis with young girls, and is invited to picnic and dinner parties.

He seems especially to cultivate the society of a widow and her two daughters.

When first he mentioned these young girls, it was with a certain restraint. He tried to give it the appearance that, with the best will in the world, he could not escape them. They worried his life out of him with invitations and with asking him to take part in all sorts of country amusements.

I was silly enough to show that I was jealous. This evidently amused him, and now he is always trying to put these damsels and their wonderful doings in front of my nose. I know of course it is only a joke, but it makes me miserable all the same, though I am too ashamed to admit it.

On the contrary I often ask him about his two little friends. At last he revenged himself in a way I did not at all like. He started talking about Erik, and insisted that he had all the time been jealous of him.

Poor Erik! I grow sad every time I think of him. I am sure he was very fond of me, or he would not have behaved in such a fine manly way when I told him I could not be his wife.

Now he is in Berlin, and I never hear from him directly. But he writes now and again to mother, and I believe she has answered his letters.

The other day when he again alluded to Erik, I told him—not wishing to have this subject mentioned again—how it had ended between Erik and me. I told him that Erik had asked me to be his wife and that I had refused. ‘Why, I need hardly tell you,’ I added.

He looked at me rather ashamed, but only said: ‘Then, please, forgive me.’

But for a long time after we were both very serious.

13th OF JULY.

I KNOW it was an absurdly mad impulse, and I was certainly severely punished for it.

The weather was perfectly lovely this morning, I was longing so much to see him, and I thought it would be amusing to pay him a little surprise visit.

I got hold of Christiane and we went off by the morning boat. We landed at Skodsborg, and Christiane stayed there while I walked along the high-road to Vedbaek.

I passed the village where he lives, but on account of his friend I dared not go in. I sent a

message by a boy I met, saying that a lady who wished to speak to him was waiting for him at the entrance to the wood.

I waited about half an hour. At last I saw him coming quickly along the road. I stood amongst the trees, holding the sunshade so that he should not at once recognise me. Not until I heard his step close by did I come forward, letting the sunshade fall.

'Is it you?' he exclaimed, and at the same moment I understood what a stupid thing I had done.

'Who else should it be?'

'No; of course not. I only thought that perhaps it was a joke the others were playing on me. Forgive me for being so long in coming to you. I was at the hotel playing croquet. How nice it is to see you. Are you here with your parents?'

'I am alone. I simply came out to see you.'

'To see me! but it is impossible for us to be seen together.'

'I thought we might have gone for a long walk.'

For a moment we stood looking at each other. Then he said: 'I think I'd better tell you straight out how it is: I hope you won't be angry with me; you know how disappointed I am that I cannot spend the afternoon with you. But a number of the people here have arranged a big picnic in which I have absolutely promised to take part. You see, I could not possibly——'

'No; of course not,' I interrupted, 'how could

you imagine I should come here and upset your plans.' His face got that nervous look I dread.

'I think you are a little unreasonable,' he said.

'Perhaps. Then please excuse that also as well as my coming; I shall go at once. Good-bye, I hope you will have a jolly time.'

'But you need not go at once. We are not starting for an hour.'

'I think it is better. Besides what could we do in such a short time, and it would be a pity for you to be compromised by being seen with me.'

He held my hand for a long time and shook his head seriously at me. 'You are most unjust to me,' he said at last. 'Do you really believe that it is for my own sake that I am afraid of our being seen together?'

'No; of course not. It is only natural you should take care of my reputation; you have always guarded it so well.'

He did not answer, but dropped my hand, murmured a good-bye, and went without looking back.

I could have killed him! But as I watched him slowly disappear without once looking back, I had to use all my strength not to call out to him. When he had quite disappeared, I sank down in despair. I lay huddled up sobbing amongst the trees, imploring his forgiveness, and saying that he could beat me and illtreat me as much as he liked if he would only not go and leave me alone.

But when again I went down to the high-road I saw two large waggonettes driving towards me,

and thought I saw him in front on one of them, sitting between two young girls, I hurried back into the wood so that he should not see me.

16th OF JULY.

ALL sorrow has vanished and joy reigns once more. We have explained ourselves, and defended ourselves. We have sealed eternal peace by kisses which were neither brother and sister kisses nor Judas's kisses, but real original kisses for which Adam and Eve took out a patent in the Garden of Eden.

Amongst all our festive days it was one of the most beautiful. The dark background and the serious beginning gave it a curious charm all its own. We both had a longing to make up for past misery by being specially good to each other. He was just like that first day I went to him. Just as chivalrous and dear, as guarded and watchful in doing everything to please me, wrapping me in an atmosphere of tenderness and affection.

Besides the day had a gentle, half sad feeling—a sunset feeling—because it was our last meeting before my departure for Sorö, where mother and I were going for three weeks.

It is hard to part from him. If things had not happened as they did to-day no human power should have driven me away from him. Now I dare leave. The memories of this day will shine on my loneliness. I know that his love is not changed.

I am now able to laugh over my unsuccessful trip to Vedbaek. Ye gods! what a martyr I made of myself! Not the least because I had no money and had to walk about hungry while he, of course, feasted off the best.

SORÖ, 20th OF JULY.

EVERY place here recalls to me memories from my childhood. For it was here that Erik and I in the holidays strolled about together, rowed on the lake, and chased the birds in the woods.

It is still there, the old oak-tree, which filled my imagination with dark terror, at the same time fascinating me. The old, curiously deformed tree, whose branches stretched themselves like gigantic palsied limbs, and which gave shelter to legions of the greedy proletariat of the air, the poor, always discontented, always shrieking rooks.

It was under this tree that Erik performed that deed which aroused my fear as well as my admiration.

It happened that one day we found the entire army of rooks wild with fury. The birds formed like a thick, black cloud which moved backwards and forwards above the tree, piercing the air with coarse and hateful shrieks. Terrified, I clung to Erik's arm and asked him what was the matter. He pointed upwards and said, 'Look there, do you see the owl, they want to kill it.'

I discovered the heavy fluffy bird which in blind

fear—now and again uttering a despairing battle-cry—flew about among its deadly enemies. Already it showed signs of having been attacked, as some of its feathers dropped through the air.

I implored Erik to save it.

He bent down, picked a sharp flint from the ground, and flung it. The owl flapped his wings a few times, then folding them fell heavily to the ground only a few yards from us. For a moment the rooks became silent. Then they started again, first singly, as though they were asking astonished questions, then in threatening, furious chorus directed to us. And when Erik lifted the dead owl up and we went away with it, the entire army of angry rooks whose prey we had seized followed us with their hoarse, revengeful shrieks. By throwing stones, clapping our hands and shouting, we sometimes succeeded in stopping them for a while. But soon after, they commenced again with renewed strength; they flew nearer and nearer, lower and lower, and at last I was so beside myself with terror that I ran along as fast as my legs could carry me, and Erik, who became infected with my fear, followed me.

But ever since then my heart always beats when I come near the old rook tree.

Even yesterday, when I stood under its branches, I fancied I heard threats of revenge in the birds' noisy voices, and I wished Erik had been at my side to protect me.

26th OF JULY.

HE is always asking me to forgive him because his letters are so few and far between, and I cannot deny that now and again they seem rather poor. But I try to understand that as it is difficult for him to express his feelings, he does not make a good letter-writer.

Now I know him so well his letters may perhaps cause me a momentary disappointment, but they never make me really sad.

I comfort myself by writing twice as long and twice as often to him. I write a letter twice a day so that he may get one with each post. When I write my evening letter I know he is reading my morning letter, and when I am busy with my morning letter he is just reading the one I wrote the evening before. In this way I build a bridge between him and me which is never broken. I am always with him. The little Vedbaek ladies shall not steal him from me. I am near him morn and eve, watching and guarding.

I am wise and say to myself: 'Let him enjoy his holiday and all the innocent amusements his stay in the country give him! What does it really matter even if he should have some little summer flirtations? When all comes to all he belongs to me. He has told me so and I trust him. Trust him blindly, and will not embitter my mind with any low suspicion.'

But should he ever be tempted too much, I am there with my letters, calling him back to the

path of virtue. As a faithful sentinel I march up morning and evening to guard his tent against all base attacks.

31st OF JULY.

HE writes that he has got orders to start rehearsals on the 8th of August, just the day before mother and I are leaving Sorö. I have now got an excellent idea. I will ask him to come here on the 7th, and spend the last day of his holiday with me. It can perfectly well be arranged. Nobody here knows him, and we could meet in the woods, where I often spend hours alone. I know several lovely places where I never meet a soul. I will secretly prepare a little lunch basket, buy a bottle of good wine, and for once in a while he shall be my guest.

I won't give up this dream—I will see it realised—whatever difficulties turn up, I will get over them.

3rd OF AUGUST.

OF course he has ever so many scruples. He writes: 'Do you think it quite wise? It would certainly be great fun, but after all, remember, dear, that we will very soon meet in Copenhagen. Do you therefore think it is worth while to expose yourself to the danger there must be in meeting me in the roads in Sorö forest?' He mentions a lot of 'ifs,' which no doubt are all very sensible, but which I don't care a fig about.

I am now going to bombard him with so many letters that he will have to give in, and after all he risks nothing, and when I wish it, then—why not?

No, my dear and wise cavalier, if you even put on your most serious face, I will answer you like the recklessly-loving girl I am, even if Sorö forest was full of fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, and other wild beasties, I will, will, will meet my love there next Sunday.

5th OF AUGUST.

VICTORY! He is coming!

In spite of serious scruples, he writes, 'as you please.' You can have as many scruples as you like if you will only come. I can see his solemn face when he wrote this letter of capitulation. I can see him shake his head half crossly, half smiling at this over-weakness: 'She is a terrible girl,' I am sure he has said to himself; 'she is so gentle and so angelic, all the same she twists me round her little finger.'

But don't be ashamed, dear one, because for once in a way you are giving in to me. I promise you I will repay you a hundredfold.

'In all likelihood I shall be with you,' he says, 'but I beg you to remember that I may be prevented. I am not saying this because I can think of anything to prevent me, but merely because I know from experience that you are always badly prepared for a disappointment.'

Thank you, my most wise person. I will now

write again, and won't forget to say that I shall consider, for instance, an earthquake sufficient excuse for not coming.

7th OF AUGUST.

Letter placed in the diary :—

'VEDBAEK, 6th OF AUGUST.

'LET me start this letter, which will cause you great sorrow, by assuring you, and I hope you will believe me, that when in my last letter I wrote about possible hindrances to my visit to Sorö, I did not know that I was going to write this letter.

'I wish you would believe, even if you are unable to understand, that this is something which has come without clear and conscious reflection, but as something inevitable, something strong and forcible which simply could not be otherwise. Though of course for a long time it has been smouldering in me, and has slowly and quietly worked its way. There were moments when I felt it, but I forced myself to believe that it meant nothing. Then again there were other moments when I confidently said to myself that it had only been foolish imaginings, a passing, meaningless dissatisfaction—everything is just as it was before.

'Until at last the truth sprang forth in my soul like an unquenchable flame. It is over. It must be over.

'Yes, Julie, the very hard and very sad thing

I have to tell you is that everything must be finished between you and me. I cannot and will not lie to you, I tell you just as it is. I am weary, hopelessly weary, I can no more.

'This came clearly to me this morning, when I had your last letter. I was still in bed when it was brought to me. I expected the letter, I knew it would come. Now, listen calmly to this, and don't judge me at once. I was lying wishing that just for once no letter would arrive, and I simply dreaded to see my landlady come in with the fat letter of which I knew every twist and turn of the writing on the envelope, and alas! even beforehand seemed to know the contents. The letter lay on the counterpane like a nightmare, it seemed heavy on my heart, filling me with a thousand vague fears. A grey oppression seemed to paralyse my brain and filled my soul with desperate weariness. I could not get myself to open the letter and read it.

'How long I lay like this I don't know. There were no clear thoughts in my head, only this heavy, grey oppression which made me so tired that now and again I fell into a nervous sleep.

'At last I forced myself with a wrench out of this drowsy state. I jumped out of bed, drew the curtains from the window so that the full daylight could stream in. Like a deliverance, almost like a happiness, the clear and conscious thought leapt into my mind, "It is over, it must be over."

'I will go on telling you the truth. I won't

garland my thoughts and feelings. It was happiness I felt at the moment. I felt so free and light-hearted. Just as if I was born again with new strength and new hopes.

‘But when a short while ago I sat down to write this letter I realised that the hardest task was still undone.

‘For the point is that I have nothing at all to reproach you with. On the contrary, I have only to thank you again and again for all the beauty you brought me, and for all your sweet love.

‘Yet I come to you saying it is over, I am weary. You must set me free, however hard and unjust it seems to you. But the most despairing part of it all is that most likely you will not be able to understand it at all. You will only understand that I have failed you in spite of all your great love, and you will either think that I am acting through madness, or that I have hitherto lived like a scoundrel. Yet the truth is that I am neither a madman nor a liar, but a liberty-sick man whose mind and soul become paralysed the moment he feels himself hemmed in by a relationship.

‘You see when you and I first met, neither of us fancied it would mean more than a moment’s fleeting and untrammelled joy. It was a caprice, an irresistible impulse in us both with no thought of a binding or constant relationship, let alone eternal love.

‘Then it happened that we really fell in love with one another. That I have loved you, I need scarcely

assure you. Though you often teasingly reproached me that I did not tell you so, you knew it by the sound of my voice, by my glance, by my whole being which never attempted to hide how precious you were to me. You came to me as something new and wonderful, so unsullied and trusting, that you aroused in me feelings more gently devoted than I had known before. In the radiant morning flush of our love I seemed to myself like a happy explorer and conqueror, free, strong, burgeoning with will and gifts for new victories.

‘We loved one another, but our love was of a different race. I loved as the experienced man, and as the man with the artist’s need for liberty. For you, love was all and everything in your life, you had no higher wish than to give yourself and to possess me entirely and without restriction.

‘I wished to enjoy our love as an oasis in the humdrum of everyday life, but you, you wanted it to be life itself. Therefore it happened quite naturally that your young, strong, passionate love ran my less vigorous love tired.

‘Our love shaped itself into something greater and more serious than I could or would embark on, and gradually it frightened me. I saw how your love grew day by day, I felt how you clung closer and closer to me, and egoist as I am, I revolted against this constant intimacy with you. I began to feel the unpleasantness of being responsible for another’s life, I felt myself restricted in my movements, enslaved, imprisoned. The moment came

when I had to break out again, feel space round me, stand alone and free.

‘Besides, the habit which had gradually crept into our love tortured and depressed me. Such men as I fear marriage just because it is love regulated and systematised. But our meetings, which in the beginning had all the charm of the unexpected, the mysterious, the fairy-tale, grew soon into well-ordered domesticity. We met on such and such days at certain hours, and gradually we spent a certain number of hours in each other’s company every day. There was nothing unexpected, nothing mysterious any longer, only a daily repetition of the one and the same.

‘Before, when you were coming to me it was a joy to prepare everything for your reception, and when we parted I asked with expectant eagerness, “When do we meet again?” Later, there came times when I had to force myself to say the conventional parting words, “I suppose we meet tomorrow?” and when you came, to ask you, “What will you have to drink?” and “Will you have a cigarette?” I hoped it would be better when I went into the country and we didn’t meet, but, unfortunately, there are such things as letters. There is always some possibility for a variation in personal intercourse, while letters are everlasting uniformity. They begin and they end with the same phrases, at the most the words occasionally change places, they are posted and distributed at regular hours, they troop up like soldiers in their

unchanging envelope uniform and their regulation stamp epaulette. All this meant nothing to you, but for me it was the shifting sand that slowly buried my weary love. For that is the beginning and the end of what I have to confess to you—I am weary. I can no more. I must be free. While writing this I feel my weariness to such a degree that I am unable to tell you of all the good warm feelings my heart still holds for you. It also seems to me undignified to adorn with beautiful words this letter which brings you a message you have every right to think brutal and unjust. I think so myself. I feel also how revolting it is to break our relationship merely because you love me too much. All the same it cannot be otherwise. All my arguments are of no value against my weary I can no more. Neither is it anything that will be cured to-morrow or the day after. Please don't believe that. No, it is over, and both you and I will be wise in not attempting to call it back to life.

‘For after this only what is ugly could follow.

‘You have often said to me, “Promise me always to treat me honestly.” The day you feel yourself tired of our love, tell me so. I can bear it if you break with me, but I could never forgive you if I discovered that I had been living on your pity and generosity.” The day you anticipated has now come, and what you asked me to tell you I tell you now frankly. Perhaps you will say you have deceived me all the same, for you have been weary

for some time. To this my answer is, I have not myself been conscious of my weariness, and could not confess that to you which I had not confessed to myself. Now when we part we will both be able to think of our love as a beautiful and wonderful experience—no bitterness will mar the memory. The parting itself is always bitter. I simply dare not think of the sorrow and pain I am causing you. But when some time has passed, and we meet again—more calmly than we could meet now—I believe you will say as I say now that we part just at the right moment. We have carried the shield of our love unblemished from the battle.

‘Farewell—try not to judge me too hardly.

‘A.’

8th OF AUGUST.

THE day passed and the night passed. A new day has begun. It was yesterday it happened, and I am alive.

So sorrow does not kill after all, and I still allow myself to live.

When I got his letter, and had read it twice, and understood that it was neither a joke nor a misunderstanding, I did not cry, I did not faint. I was quite calm, and reflected in a curious clear and calm way. ‘So it is really finished,’ I said aloud to myself. My voice sounded dry and curiously uninterested. I thought to myself, ‘You ought to have said that with more feeling.’ But there was no feeling in me. Everything had stiffened within

me. My heart did not beat, and my nerves did not tremble. Even my face had grown stiff, the skin seemed quite tight. I smoothed it, and forced it into a smile to make sure that I could move it.

I went out of the house. Where, I did not know. But a voice within me went on saying, 'It is impossible for you to stay here. You must get away before any of the others see you.'

I met people I knew. I bowed to them, and I spoke to an old lady. She told me a long story about an illness from which she had just recovered. When we parted she said, 'You look perfectly charming to-day,' and added, 'but of course you are so young and happy.' I reached the forest and stood on a little open place by the lake. I stood on the little landing-stage and looked down into the water thinking, 'If you were really very sad you would let yourself glide down there, and soon you would be all right.'

From the town sounded the church bells, calling people to afternoon service. I looked round, and it seemed that never before had I realised how beautiful the place was. My sight seemed clearer. I saw things I had never noticed before. For instance the tiny island where the trees like love-sick narcissus bent their foliage to mirror themselves in the water. I heard numberless fine sounds in the rushes near the lake, and from the grasses and trees in the wood the voices of insects buzzing, of birds nestling among the leaves, of the fishes making bubbles on the surface of the water.

I lost myself in admiration of the shape of the everchanging clouds which looked so calm and unchanging on this quiet summer day, yet when one closely followed their slow gliding through space, one discovered that one moment they were shining gold-edged islands, the next large swooping birds, suddenly to dissolve themselves into crowds of tiny playing cloud children.

With one big glance I took in the entire picture, and I thought, 'Even should you never come here again, you will always remember what it looks like.'

I walked into the thickness of the forest. The same curious clearness followed me, the same reflective, receptive mood.

Until the sudden remembrance of his letter in my pocket stabbed my heart and made my soul shiver. My knees shook under me, and I had to lean against a tree to prevent myself from falling. I crushed the letter in my hand, and without reading it I saw every word before me.

It was really true—he had left me—it was all over.

I had said the same words before. They had followed me all the time, but not until this moment had they reached my heart, which they made writhe with pain.

Finished, not to see him any more!

What is he really like? I tried to recall his face, but it fled from me; I only saw two large dark eyes which calmly, wearily, and ironically smiled at me.

I cried to heaven in fear and despair. I implored

and prayed that it might not be true. 'I understand it is a punishment, O God, but don't you think you have tortured me enough. Now I am going to close my eyes, and when I open them I pray you let it be a dream from which I awaken.'

Again I stood by the lake, and it seemed as though my only salvation was to throw myself in. I did not rave any longer, I was sad unto death. I wept quietly and gently, I saw the beautiful summer landscape in front of me, and it struck me that I, who was so young, had nothing more to hope from life.

When a voice within me said, 'Yes, there is still hope, perhaps even now there is a wire for you, or another letter may be on its way.'

Yes, of course that's it, that's it, that's what will happen, and I hastened back, allowing hope to build the loveliest dreams.

There was no wire, and no letter has come.

But I won't give up all hope before I have seen him.

Already he must be back in town, and we leave here to-morrow. I have written to him. He will be astonished with my letter, and I think he will like it. It is quite free from anything hysterical. It is calm and sensible. I wrote, 'Perhaps you are right in thinking that something a little faded has crept over our love, and possibly—as you suggest—there is no other remedy than that we don't meet for some time. But perhaps it is also

possible that by mutual efforts we may arrange matters in a way which would not hurt quite so much. Let me therefore know what time within the next few days I can see you. Don't be afraid that I shall come with too miserable a face. On the contrary you will see how clearly and sympathetically I shall understand your every mood, and altogether try to behave as you would like.'

9th OF AUGUST.

LATE last night I sat in front of my mirror brushing my hair. I was dead tired, but not at all sleepy, and I sat looking at my reflection, getting quite frightened by noticing the pale face with ghostly shining eyes. I began to tremble, and nervously turned my head away so as not to see any more.

My eyes fell on the wall behind the chest of drawers. The wall was covered with an old yellow paper with spots of damp, and here and there it was torn. On the musty paper crawled an insect, a long, narrow, flat, brown creepy thing with many quickly moving legs. It surely came from the crack in the right-hand corner. With horror I watched its manœuvres along the wall. It was seeking the warmth of the candle on the chest of drawers. I stood up with a clothes brush in my hand to kill it, when I saw another just the same peep out from the crack, and slowly move along the wall. I stood paralysed with an uncanny fear, staring with wide, stiff eyes at these loathsome

things, when look! it seemed as if the wall was suddenly covered with them, one after the other the insects appeared from the crack and crawled in a long caravan towards the chest. I also discovered now that they came not only from the crack, but from every tiny split in the paper, and in great numbers they hurried out from the cracks between the walls and the floor.

I did not dare to move—did not dare to kill them, fearing that for each I killed ten others would appear. I had not the courage to kill these things which seemed to come from a grave bringing with them death and putrefaction.

I only stood waiting for the terrible moment when they would reach the chest and come near to me. Already they stretched their shimmering legs to reach the drapery over my mirror. With every nerve strained I watched their efforts. Then I started with feeling a cold touch on my hand which rested on the chest of drawers. With a shriek I shook the insect off, and discovered in the same moment that they had started to crawl up the chest from the floor.

In that minute I was mad. I thought, 'Here they come, look at them, they are coming like corpse-carriers to take me to the grave.' I rushed from the room and into mother's who woke up startled, and to whom I could only say that I was frightened, only frightened. Mother took me in her arms and soothed me, like she did when I was a little child. Gradually I grew calmer and lay weeping gently.

Then mother said: 'Do tell me what is the matter. Why did you let Erik go away, and why are you so miserable?'

But I begged her not to question me. Later on I would tell her everything. Mother took my face between her hands and looked straight into my eyes, while she said: 'There is only one thing, Julie, you must and shall tell me—is it possible that you are——? I stopped her by putting my hand over her mouth. 'No, mother dear,'—and I smiled sadly—'that which you are thinking of you need not fear.' 'Then, thank God, you don't know how frightened I have been during the last few days. Of course I had guessed that there was something you were keeping secret from us. I thought you were meeting some one at Christiane's, and that in time you would come and tell us that you were engaged.'

'No, mother dear, in that also you are mistaken. I have no engagement to tell you of.'

10th OF AUGUST, EVENING, COPENHAGEN.

I AM again in the old nest. It is dark and ugly here, but what does it matter. After all I breathe the same air as he does. I may meet him in the street, and when to-morrow I have fetched his letter I can be with him in ten minutes.

I am glad that at present mother and I are alone, so I need not make any pretence of cheerfulness. Father and Frantz are in Jutland, and they won't be back for another ten days.

11th OF AUGUST.

HE does not wish me to come to him, at all events not at present. He dares not see me yet, he writes. He wants to be left alone. But he promises soon to send me a message.

20th OF AUGUST.

EVERY morning when I wake up I think, 'To-day I shall have a letter.' But the days go by, heavy, long, and grey and they bring nothing from him. No greeting, no message, not the tiniest word. How can he be so cruel! He is treating me in a way which even he could hardly defend.

22nd OF AUGUST.

HAS he disappeared from earth? Where does he hide himself, and what is he doing?

In vain I look for him in the streets at the times and in the places where he usually goes. For hours I have stood, outside his house, but I never get a glimpse of him.

25th OF AUGUST.

NOW I understand, he never means to see me again.

Time after time I have been on the staircase, but I did not dare to ring the bell. To-day I did, and the maid came out to say he was not at home. It was not true, I could read in her face that she had orders not to admit me. She seemed embarrassed and looked pitifully at me.

Fancy that he would submit me to so much humiliation.

But I will see him. I will speak to him. He has no right to treat me as he does.

Though of course that is just the point, he can treat me exactly as he pleases. He may humiliate me and ill-treat me—I should only feel it a joy to be tortured by him. I will crawl at his feet like a dog—he can kick me away, I will return and I won't leave him in peace until he lets me stay with him.

I thought that there was perhaps some one else he loves now and who comes to him, and that this was the reason that he would not see me.

I will write to him : Love any one else you like. If I am not sufficient for you and if you need change—well—it must be so. I shall understand. You are an artist. You need new impressions, new inspirations. I am only a poor little girl with nothing but my love. But I want you to know that without anger, I can share you with another.

The only thing I demand is that you shall not give me up. I will—in spite of everything and everybody—have some part in you, and I want to be the one who is near you when all the others have gone.

1st OF SEPT.

HE answers me :
'No, Julie, you must not send me such letters. As I learned to know you—as I think of

you—you stand for me as a symbol of nobility, a fine and original nature who never worried about bourgeois laws and prejudices, a refined little woman who never grew common by breaking the rules of good society, but who on the contrary gained thereby and developed into a nobler personality.

‘No, Julie, it cannot possibly be you who sent me that housemaid’s letter which took your name in vain.

‘Where could you, pure, proud, dear girl, have learned those hectic, excited words.

‘I have—I know it only too well—treated you cruelly. But what you are now doing for yourself is a thousandfold more cruel.

‘My own darling, my soul’s proud and sweet memory, I sorrow over your letter as over a vandalism. More than that, I am ashamed on your account, and to me it seems the saddest thing I have ever experienced.’

I have written to him for the last time :—

‘I thank you for your letter. It hurt so much that I could hardly bear it. I needed the brutal truth and it has done its work. Don’t think that I look upon it as a humiliation that I was ready to lie in the dust at your feet. But it was unworthy of me to force myself on you when I ought to have understood you do not want me back at any price.

‘I ask your forgiveness with all my heart. I knew

all the time I had no right to demand anything from you. Of my own free will I came to you and gave myself to you—you never tied me by promises and conditions. But you were very, very good to me. You were too good. This is my only excuse for finding it so difficult to let you go.

‘But before we part, I wish you to know how altogether foolish and undignified I have been in my relationship to you. From the very first day I believed it would end in marriage. When I told you I had no wish to marry you, when I even assured you I should consider it perfect madness—I told you a lie. All my thoughts and longings were directed to the one aim of making myself so necessary to you that some day you would ask me to be your wife.

‘I am not at all that dignified, high-minded girl you thought me. Behind all my brave show of independence was lurking, first unconsciously then intentionally, the cowardly bourgeois hope that ultimately we should have the legitimate church blessing on our relationship.

‘My calculation failed miserably. During these days I have asked myself if I did not set about it in the most foolish way. I might more surely have reached my goal if I had been more reserved in my way of loving.

‘But after all, I believe I chose the only way possible for me, because I loved you too well to barter myself inch by inch for the highest price.

‘I have lost my game, but I don't regret it; how-

ever poor the future may be, I know that the stake I risked is after all not lost. However poor, I shall be richer in memories than anybody else in the world. Come what may I will always bless the day I became yours.

'Gaily I came to you, sadly I turn away from you now you have left me. You took much but you gave much. You, my dear and beloved master, my white Sheik, the dream of my youth and its sorrow-laden happiness.

'I thank you for it all, for your loving graciousness, for your severe punishment.

'High you aim, recklessly you ride, never caring whether on your way you crush sand or blossoms. May God make your victorious ride bright and happy!

JULIE.'

12th OF SEPT.

I FEEL so cold. The days grow shorter and the evenings fall over me dark and heavy. I sit in the window while the daylight wanes; I look over aimlessly to the house where before my thoughts played their fairy game. The house is mournful and commonplace like our own, and where before my fairy prince moved about sits now a fat, indolent matron filling with sleepy stitches a piece of canvas.

They say that Erik has returned. Emmy told me the other day that she has seen him.

I am glad he has not called here. I don't want him to see how miserable I am.

I feel so cold, it is as if the whole house shivered. Never before has it been quite so dull, and cold, and sad. We move about like shadows. Nobody speaks aloud, and we meet as at a funeral.

When mother and I are alone in the evening, we don't talk. We sit each with our own thoughts, but I know that her thoughts are all round me.

THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

I FEEL happier at grandmama's. As often as I can I go to her after lunch.

Through the noisy streets where the people rush and scramble in the struggle for existence—through the feverish life, which to me seems so coarse and hideous, leaving on my soul the impression of a hideous battle with hateful shrieks and despairing moaning, I fly to the little side street where grandmama lives. There I only hear the noise in a softened murmur. But when I am once safely in grandmama's sitting-room, I feel as if I have escaped a great danger.

Here it is cosy and restful, here I find peace for my sorrow, healing for my wound. Here all revolting thoughts are softened down, here are smoothed out all violent desires and sick longings.

Here grandmama sits old and full of days and of the great wisdom which does not ask and does not blame, which understands and forgives, which holds comfort for everything. I become like a child again in grandmama's room. I have my place just as when I was a little girl on a footstool at her

feet, and sit there looking through the old portfolios full of faded etchings.

Struensen and his lovely royal mistress ; Frederick the Sixth, a poor thin-legged boy in warlike uniform receiving the troops ; the fire of Christianborg Castle in 1794 ; Robespierre who on the same page is shown jumping out of the window of the town hall and being carried off to the guillotine, with mangled arms and legs ; Fru Heiberg—the great actress—first as a bewitching, unconscious maiden, and later as a sentimental celebrity with long shawl and ethereal glances.

Or I take a piece of work and try to make myself useful, or I read the newspaper to grandmama, who with the greatest interest follows the foreign news and nods solemnly every time we hear of fresh labour strikes.

Yes, I am happier at grandmama's—she and old Marie vie with each other in spoiling me. As soon as I am settled down comfortably grandmama says with a roguish shake of her head to her old maid : 'Well, Marie, I suppose we have nothing at all to-day to give Miss Julie.'

After which Marie answers, just as roguishly, 'I really don't know, ma'am, but I better have a look.'

To the general surprise she brings a little later either an orange or a piece of home-made cake, or some pudding with jam. There is always something, and it always tastes childishly good because these dear old people are so happy in giving it to me, and understand so well that just what I need is to be treated like a sorrowful child.

OCT.

I WISH I could travel far away from it all. I shiver when I think of the long winter in surroundings which every moment of the day remind me of that which is dead and ought to be buried and forgotten, but which still bleeds within me like an open wound.

But where, and how?

What I need is to stand on my own feet, work hard, battle with life, make my own way. But I am no good for anything, except that bit of china painting, which is not enough to live or die on. I have said to myself the only way out of it is to get away to America and take a situation as maid, governess, or it does not matter what. But I am too much of a coward. I have not got the reckless courage which is needed for living under any sort of straits. My body is spoilt and dare not start a contest with heavy labour, and I should suffer by being treated as a menial.

I should not even have the energy to force the permission from my parents. I felt this the other day when I testingly said to mother that I thought of going away. She looked terrified at me and said, 'Could you really do that to me?' In the same moment all my will-power had melted, and my plans for travel and work collapsed miserably. No, I have neither strength nor courage to break away. But if I go on staying at home I shall go to pieces. I think that I must feel like a bird who, after being imprisoned in a cage, is allowed to spend some free

and beautiful days in the wood only to be again imprisoned. Something in me is broken. I want to fly away, but however much I flap my wings I cannot start a new flight.

13th OF OCT.

AT last that has happened which I both hoped and feared. I have met him. I went to town to visit grandmama. He came towards me with a friend. We saw each other some way off. Now and again people came between us so that we were hidden from each other; then again our eyes met. My first impulse was to turn back. But I forced myself to go on. I felt there was something which had to be decided now. And calmly and quietly—with a terrible effort of will—I kept my eyes fixed on him. We were only a few steps from each other. I saw a nervous glint in his eyes—I never let mine leave his—and when we passed he quickly took off his hat and bowed.

It was the first time he had ever greeted me in a public street.

I felt at that moment that I had been the stronger. But as soon as he had passed my strength failed; my knees shook under me, and I had to seek shelter in a doorway to support myself. If he had turned and followed me! I grew quite faint at the thought of it.

But he did not come; and while I went further on my way, and as I gradually got assured that he would not come, I thought that, though it was a

bitter disappointment, I could now perhaps even hope for deliverance.

THE LAST DAYS OF OCTOBER.

OF late I have often been in Fredericksberg Park. It is so beautiful there just now when the leaves are dying in the most wonderful colouring, carried golden to the earth by singing sunbeams.

I quite understand why this garden is much frequented by old people and lonely souls. At its fence the noise of the town stops, and the park is an asylum for quiet thoughts and quiet sorrows. It is a graveyard of sweet memories and broken illusions.

Every day I meet the same people. It is as if I knew them all, and I seem also to know why they come here. There is the old neatly-clothed gentleman whose mouth always moves in the angry, white face, and who incessantly beats the air with his stick. What can he be but a late civil service man who continues his fury against his—to him—unjust dismissal? And does one need to ask what the tall, slender lady, dressed in black, is thinking of? She comes with her young daughter, who is also in mourning, and she smiles faintly and absent-mindedly at the young girl's chatter. Or she, the young cripple, who is wheeled along the path by a tired, worn-out motherly person.

Or I myself? Do not the others suspect the fate which has made me a member of their little community?

A few days ago Erik paid us a visit, but I did not see him. On hearing his voice in the hall I hastened into my own room, and when mother shortly after asked me to see him I begged her to tell him that I was not very well.

1st OF NOV.

WAS it fancy or reality? When to-day I went to the park I saw a figure like Erik's disappear amongst the carriages. I wonder had he followed me? But if it was he, why did he not come up to me? He, at all events, has no reason to avoid a meeting.

30th OF DECEMBER.

TWO months have gone since I last wrote in my diary. Nothing has happened worth writing down, and I thought my life was at an end, and that everything that happened in the future would be like withered leaves falling over something past and dead.

But while I thought in this way, I lied to myself. For while the sad and bitter days dropped over me tiny new shoots began to spring up quietly, and without my knowledge, under the withered leaves.

I felt, and I was ashamed of the feeling, that I was too young to have finished with life. I caught myself dreaming of a future which was not all memories. I tried to thrust these temptations away; they seemed a sacrilege to my sorrow. I clung to my sorrow. I sought shelter and protec-

tion under its large, heavy wings like a nun in her convent cell. But just when I fancied myself most safe, I felt in my soul vague stirrings of new hopes and promises, and I understood that I was conquered.

But I am no longer a child of illusions. I don't expect a fairy prince. I don't believe that life will offer me an eternal feast. I know I will have to take the bad with the good—more week-days than fete-days. I know that what is coming will be neither grand nor remarkable, but I know also that I ought to be very grateful that at all events it is life. I must take my part in life since I cannot go to the dead, and since I am too young to find peace in the convent of sorrow. And since Erik, my faithful friend, will take me as I am without question, without reproach, fine and manly without demanding any humiliation on my part.

It was he I saw that day outside the park. A few days after I met him again, and that day we walked together, and he told me how he had often watched me, but had kept at a distance because he thought I preferred to be alone. I answered that I had no reason to seek loneliness, but he, not believing me, kept silent. During the weeks that followed, I often met him, and now and again we talked together. He began again to come as before, and every time he came the temptation invaded my soul.

At last one evening, about a week ago, he found me alone, and let me understand that he knew

everything. He did not tell me straight out, but he told me this story:—

One of his friends in Germany loved a young girl. He was a clever merchant and a good fellow, but neither very amusing nor very interesting, just an everyday sort of person like me, for instance, he added with a smile. She was—then came a long, flattering description. Besides being very charming, she was a romantic little creature with exaggerated notions of life. It was therefore not to be wondered at that she let her merchant-cousin understand that his love was hopeless. She flew away from him, and she flew far. Then came the day he found her again wingshot and sorrowful. Her spirited flight had not brought her joy. Her pain hurt him more than if it had been his own, for he loved her still, and had never loved anybody else. He did not ask her to be his, for he feared to hurt her sick heart, but he tried to show her that she had no better friend in the world, and that his greatest happiness would be to take care of her. She understood him, and when some time had passed she came to him and told him that she had grown very fond of him. And now they are happy married merchant folk in a little German town.

When Erik had finished his story we were both rather embarrassed, and for some time neither of us spoke. We sat some time looking at each other, and I thought that after all he could not know everything. At last, therefore, I asked, 'Then the young German lady had been engaged to

somebody else?' 'No,' said Erik, and he looked at me with a steady glance, 'she had been another man's mistress.' 'And yet?' 'In his eyes she had not sinned; she had merely loved another. He was happy because he could now help her, and because he knew that if she were his wife she would not betray him.'

Then we talked about other things, but when Erik was going, I said, 'Do be a dear, and come on New Year's Eve, as you did in the old days.' His eyes grew moist, and his voice trembled when he answered, 'Thank you, Julie.'

But later, when father and mother came home, and I told mother that I had invited Erik for the New Year's Eve, she was happier, the darling little mother, than I have seen her for a long time. That evening we sat up late and talked confidentially together as we used to; we wept together, and we laughed too, and mother could not say all the good things she was going to do for me.

It is quite settled. Erik will be here for New Year's Eve, and when the old clock rings out the New Year, no popping champagne corks will accompany its festive chimes, but I will quietly touch Erik's hand and beg him to help me to make the New Year happy.

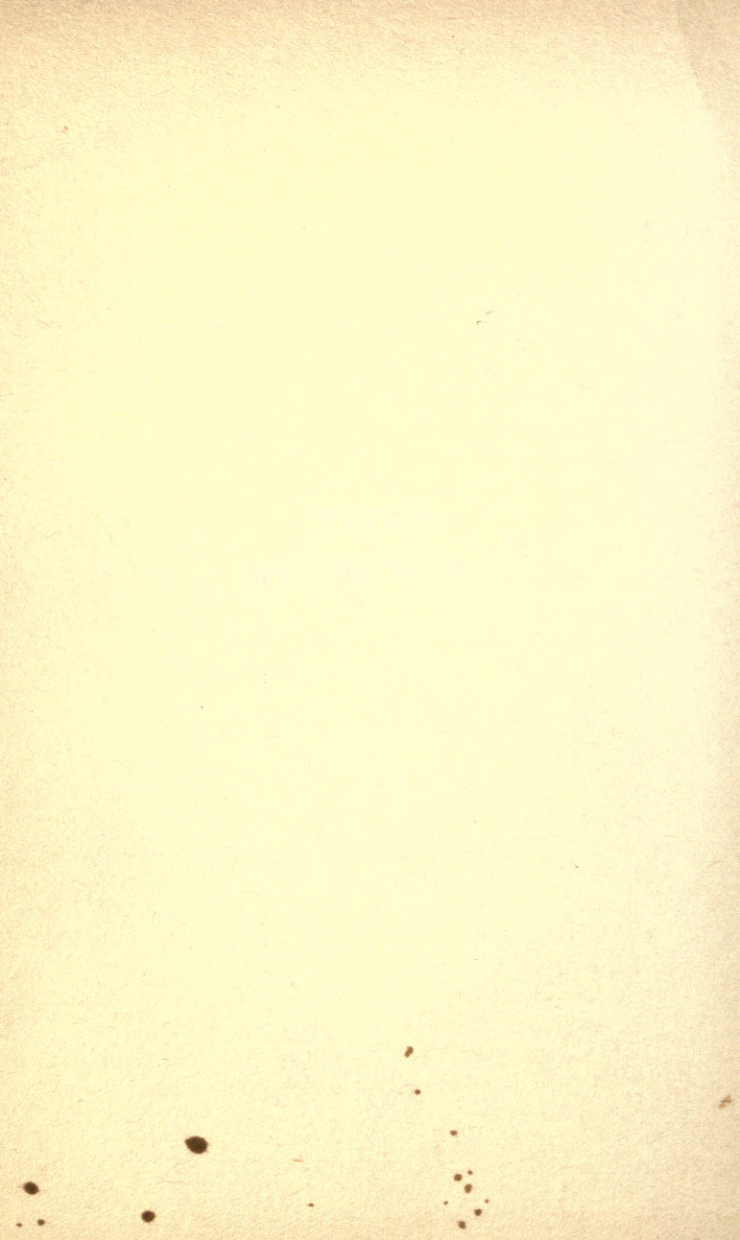
Before this I shall have set my house in order. I have taken leave of all my memories of him. I have buried his letters, kissed them for the last time, for the last time wet them with my tears. I have also burnt his photograph; it was hardest

to part with that one of him as a little boy. Now it has all gone, but the veil which lay in the drawer with all the other things I could not burn. Mother's and my veil. I buried my face in it; it seemed to me a living being, a faithful friend, silent to all others, but whispering to me a sweet and intoxicating perfume of beautiful memories. I could not kill that. I felt as if it imploringly touched my cheek. I kissed it, and wept into its soft folds, and promised it that we two should never part. I will wind it round my diary and hide them both so that no one shall find them. But should hours come when life seems grey, and poor, and empty, I will seek out my two old confidants, and revive with them the short time when life's rich and manifold splendours, like a wonderful revelation, blessed my poor youth.

My diary is finished. The year I started with such uncertainty is finished. It became the year of my fate. Rich in happiness and rich in pain. I wonder which was greater, the happiness or the sorrow? I cannot, and will not, measure it. I only know that I wish nothing altered.

Beautiful and terrible year, I part from you in gratitude. Because you wrote my life's fairy-tale—never to be forgotten.

MARIE
A BOOK OF LOVE



MARIE: A BOOK OF LOVE

MY beloved is the most desirable of all women. I
Many women have given me their love. They came and they went—loves of a day, a week, or a year. I am grateful to every one of them; but I fear I forgot them the moment they were outside my door. There was only one whom I always remembered, even when these others were with me; for she was the radiant ideal with whom they were all compared, near whom every one else faded. There was only one I always wished to enter my door, for she alone seemed ever fresh and new. There is only one with whom I would wish to live, for with her life takes on a golden meaning, a sunbright reality; there is only one I would wish to die with, for with her I know no fear. The name of my beloved is Marie. She is fairer than all other women.

I THINK nothing of the praise a poet offers the II
woman who is his first and only love. For what is his judgment worth? The judgment of an ignoramus, a country clown! and more than likely his beloved is not worth all the fine words he steals from the language to bedeck her. It

were as if a man knew only one colour and said : This colour, this blue or this red or this yellow, is the most glorious of all colours. We could hardly indeed say that he talked like a blind man, though he would really be little better. Thus, had I a mistress who was satisfied when I said, You are the first and only one, you are the first in the world—I would put her from me with disdain. But if she were sure of herself, if she valued my adoration, she would say : Take ten, take twenty other mistresses, choose amongst those whom men most desire, and if you, after having possessed them, still call me the best in the world, I will be proud and happy.

When I say to Marie, You are lovelier than all others, her heart can beat in proud joy. I was not true to her before I knew I spoke the truth.

III **I** DID not know I spoke the truth, before I thought her lost.

It is the trial I would wish every man for his love. A bitter trial it is, but it is an ordeal of cleansing fire as well.

Sorrow purifies, and sorrow fertilises. The love sown in carelessness through sorrow grows strong and pure.

Blessed be the sorrow which hallowed my love for Marie.

IV **S**HE came to me an ignorant child. I can see her still, as she was at that time. So superior, so sure of herself as only the innocent are. You

would have taken her for a matron of grave experience. She talked of life as though she knew it inside and out, as if she had tried and tasted it all, and was already disappointed and tired. She assured me, with wondering baby-eyes, that she was seriously thinking of taking the veil. What could she hope from life? She knew that there was nothing for her but tranquil resignation for the rest of her days. 'For,' as she said convincingly, 'happiness can only be found in love, and I and love have done with each other. The student—to whom I was engaged—I have learned to despise. His caresses grew hateful to me, his love-sick words filled me with loathing. No, I am not mad for love.'

She said it with tired voice, she said it, too, with burning cheeks and shining eyes. A woman wedded to chastity, who was fit for but one thing—love.

It was then as she stood before me, a tall, slender girl confiding to me her baby-sorrows, that I fell in love with her. How charming she was with her simple-hearted sadness. How sweet she looked in her pretty frock!

MARIE'S pretty frock! The frock she wore V that first day of our acquaintance. Never shall I forget it.

The time came when Marie had many beautiful and expensive dresses, but in none of them had she ever looked so lovely as in the simple frock which

at that time was her only splendour. It was a frock with a light flower-sprinkled blouse, which without being silk looked as though it were. It was pleated over the bosom and fastened closely round the throat with a tiny silver-gilt baby-brooch.

A dear little 'Sunday-girl' she looked in her humble finery, which betrayed her own ladylike ambition as well as a mother's economy. How afraid she was lest she should spill a drop of wine on her dear flower-sprinkled blouse, and when the sad accident happened, how eager she was to rub out the ugly stain, though all the time she tried to behave as if she had plenty more such precious garments at home.

Funny little lady, dear little Sunday-girl! you dear transparent hypocrite, who, while you rubbed and rubbed the spots, assured me that it did not matter in the least with that old frock.

That old frock, your only pretty one—my eyes grow moist as I think of it. Through that thin flowered blouse it was that I first breathed the fragrance of your virgin body, through that little blouse I first felt the anxious beating of your heart.

VI **M**Y heart was touched by this little girl in the flower-sprinkled blouse, this little lady with the grave experience. I think it was this blouse that made me so gentle to Marie. That flowered blouse which was her only finery, and which it was so hard to see spoiled.

As a rule men are great fools with women. They are too cautious. Women don't want to be wooed, they love best to be conquered. Nearly all of them have an inherited instinct which makes them feel that they are born to be the weak and the yielding. They like to feel themselves under a man's strong and masterful will. Quite involuntarily they despise the men who meekly sue for their favours. How often in their hearts must they have cried 'Fool,' after the man who has been frightened away by those barricades of virtue, behind which they entrench themselves, only because they love to be taken by force of arms.

But with Marie there was no need for extreme measures. I knew that the day would come when of her own free will she would seek my arms, as the home to which she naturally belonged. I knew it by the melting way in which she met my glance and pressed my hand. I knew it the first day—when she had neither seen nor heard me—as I stood behind her and noticed her body quiver and tremble from her head to the tips of her long nervous fingers.

The strategy of an impetuous warrior was not needed here—besides, the flower-sprinkled blouse softened my heart. I did not even wish that too soon she should be mine. As the gardener loves to watch a rare flower grow and develop, and, without touching the bud, will carefully remove a sprig or softly uncover a leaf, taking care that it

has enough light and warmth and water, so did I love to see Marie develop into full-grown womanhood, into full-grown love.

VII **A**LMOST too patiently did the gardener wait. For the moment came, when Marie—blushing deeply, but like a true daughter of Eve, with mocking in her eyes—pulled my sleeve and said, ‘Are you stupid?’

Some women imagine that men like them to put on pretty, terrified airs of being betrayed, to play the prude and pretend hysterical fears and tears. Such affectations may impress boys, or those green young men who think themselves criminals when a woman is lying in their arms. Men of the world, however, find no attraction in these airs and graces, which are seldom sincere, and are never original. The hypocrisy makes them angry, ruffling their tenderness as well, and it mars the beauty and solemnity of an hour which should be the sweetest memory in a woman’s life.

Not so Marie! Marie, most refined of women. I praise you and thank you for that.

VIII **M**Y virgin bride, my Marie. Holy night, when Marie became mine!

Peace without and within. Only a single candle is burning.

I enter the room, and lo! on the bed there lies my bride, white and sweet and smiling. In devotion I kneel down and kiss her hand the giver, her

mouth the promise, and her bosom which trembles in sweet expectation.

I am in her arms, the arms she has so trustfully opened for me. I am looking into her eyes. Their changing expression shows me her anxiety, her amazement, her thankfulness, her exultation at suddenly understanding life's hitherto undreamt-of wonders.

The room is filled with glorious music. Space seems to open out higher above us, to spread wider around us, and closely embraced, mouth to mouth, we float together away from all earthly trouble and sorrow.

Holy night!

MARIE was mine! But I was not hers, or IX thought I was not. Neither did she think me hers. She had no faith in my love, but I knew what she did believe. She told me often, and I never denied it, for she used to look so charming as she said it. Jealous to her finger-tips, and yet so full of common-sense, so willing to 'understand.' She actually believed I had ten mistresses a day—no less! Dear innocent little girl, what wonderful ideas you must have of the strength of man. Surely you cannot have learned your multiplication table. Your imagination runs away with you; and on that point Marie was as innocent as the rest. She came to me at least six days out of the seven, and never once did she find my love asleep. All the same she assured me with the

most flattering gravity, that—as all the town knew—I had mistresses by the score.

It is true I deceived Marie.

Yet, I was hers much more than she thought, more than I thought myself.

Not to speak of ‘all the town.’

X ‘**A**LL the town!’ How I loathe the vermin of slander, which through the keyholes and the chinks of the doors come crawling into our homes, dragging with them a train of their own dirt. You may guard your private life behind double windows and shutters, all the town will none the less have been standing outside with its own filthy thoughts. And the filth sticks to your windows and to your doors.

Every morning I see on my bedroom window an old fat fly. He is quite grey with age and seems too lazy to move.

But as soon as I come near him, whip! he has gone. I hear him buzz amongst the bed-curtains. I hear him smack heavily against the walls or the ceiling. I open all the windows and go hunting him with a towel. Suddenly he disappears. He hides himself in the rug, behind the mirror, or on the frame of a picture. There he sits perfectly quiet, until I am tired of searching. But every morning I find him again on my window-pane. He never leaves me. With black specks he soils my sheets, and night after night he sings his foul gossiping song over my bed.

When one evening Marie undressed in front of the mirror there was the loathsome beast on her white neck.

MARIE is as white and pure as any girl in the XI whole world. She has a fragrance sweeter than any flower. Her breath is pure, her whole body is without a fault. From head to foot she is sheer delight. She is one of those women who without shame can step before Nature's tribunal. She dare even show her feet.

The poets have many lies on their consciences. But on no subject do they romance so shamelessly as on the feet of their beloved. A traditional gallantry constrains the poets to praise the feet of women. Yet a well-formed foot in our high-heeled Chinese days is as seldom seen as the blue flower of poetry itself.

The first time I saw Marie undress, I watched her with fear and misgiving. I know some of the loveliest women, who never, except perhaps when they are alone, take off their stockings. Like the peacocks and the mermaids, they are shy of revealing their lower parts.

When Marie had nothing more to take off except her white stockings, she sat down on the edge of the bed, stretched out her feet, and said, 'Pull my stockings off, please.'

I knew then that she was perfect! And kneeling before her, I kissed with delight a foot as beautiful, as chubby and sweet, as any that your lying poets have pretended for their loves.

XII **T**HE man who has never seen his beloved undress, does not know her. Her beauty, her fascinations are then endlessly multiplied. She seems to be created anew with every falling garment. For it is the greatest charm of the female dress: that it transforms its wearer.

—Marie is at her toilet. There, tall and slender she stands in her closely-fitting dark costume. Her mien is demure, her manner dignified. A well-bred young damosel. That is how Marie looks when in the afternoon she walks down the street among the other correct and demure young ladies.

But— the dark gown disappears and with it the correct little lady. I find instead a merry soubrette in bare arms, bare neck, and in a short striped silk petticoat. She has quite a colour and her eyes are shining. You are like a real peasant girl, Marie, a peasant girl from the Opera!

Then ribbons are loosened and hooks are unfastened, and the corset and the petticoats slip down. The sweetest little babe-in-breeches hides her face on my shoulder. How tiny she has become in her manly garb, this big grown-up girl.

Then at last she stands in her long flowing chemise, a pale blue ribbon drawn through the embroidery round the neck. Quite a little girl, a child, who lazily stretches out her arms and begs to be put to bed.

XIII **W**ITH many clothes, with few clothes, with no clothes at all—Marie is always beautiful. Yet, that is not the reason why Marie is more

precious to me than all other women, of whom many no doubt possess beauty just as great. No, the secret is—that God made Marie especially for me, for my taste, for my delight. That Marie knows quite well. First notice her when she is with strangers. She always seems uneasy and restless, she is not sure of herself, her manners are forced; sometimes she is too gay, sometimes too silent and taciturn. She is like a bird in a strange cage. But the moment she enters my room she looks natural and at ease. She is neither flapping her wings nor hanging her head. She feels that here is her home. Here she becomes just herself, that is, she forgets herself in frank joy or fearless grief. Here is nothing to upset her. From the very day we first met she understood that it was to me she belonged, and of that there has never since been a moment's doubt in her soul.

This simple conviction that she was mine—especially the fact that she never pretended it was otherwise—imperceptibly, but the more surely, bound my heart to Marie.

There are women who believe they can best win men by a coquettish game of hide-and-peek, now approaching, now fleeing, meanwhile dispersing smiles to right and left, and pretending that there are arms stretched out ready to catch them on every hand, if only they could make up their mind whose arms to prefer. For such poor make-believe Marie thought herself too good, and she was wise. Only weak men care to tread that foolish dance. Marie

loved me—nothing more. She was mine as much as I wanted. The day dawned when I wanted her all in all. The happiest day for us both.

XIV **M**ARIE was mine as much as I wanted. Among the many mean and cunning arts of love which are taught to our young women, the ugliest is that which says that woman ought always to make a favour of herself. Love thus becomes a transaction in which woman sells herself to the highest bidder. This is degrading to love, and still more to woman. *He* loves her, *she* loves him. Both have the same longing, the same desire. How mean then to deny her lover his natural right, and only to give it to him as a charity for which he must humbly pray.

If a woman told me she loved me and yet looked demure or took offence at my passion, I would turn from her with impatience and let her go as unworthy of love. Marie never said me nay. She followed my call as patiently as the lamb follows the shepherd's gentle whistle. I have called Marie at all times, when she was tired, and when she slept—but she came to me ever with smiling face, and never did she feel anything but joy in answering her lover's call, only too proud that he should call her so often.

If Solomon, the kingly poet, had known you, Marie, he would have written to you like this:—

‘The shepherd is down in the valley playing on his reed. He is longing for his beloved, who has

followed her sisters to the mountains. But see on the mountain top she stands, staff in hand, watching for the shepherd, who plays the well-known tune. When she sees him, she springs like a gazelle down the mountain, over the sharp stones, through the thistle and the cactus thick with thorns. To move faster she throws away her staff. Thorns tear her gown and pierce her ankles. Stones cut her sandals to pieces and gash her feet. The maiden's way down the mountain is red with blood. But never does she rest, for she hears her lover's flute. She throws herself at the shepherd's feet, she kisses his mantle, saying: "Be not angry, my lord, that I did not come before."

'My beloved,' says the shepherd, 'is swift and generous as the forest spring. She will not let me languish.'

MARIE, my ever generous spring, I know XV
what envious people will say of you, men
who turn the treadmill of a joyless marriage,
women who bear their children in marriage beds
void of beauty.

They will lift horrified eyes to a heaven which
laughs at their prudish folly, they will call you a
wanton.

Marie a wanton! One might as well call the
rose a stink-pot or the nightingale a squeaking
toy. Never one moment has Marie's pure bosom
found lodging for a wanton thought. She is an

innocent young girl, to whom love seems as natural as fragrance to the rose, as song to the nightingale. But though so deeply in love, she is none the less a very wise and clever little girl. She can sew and knit and embroider. She knows several languages and is rich in knowledge. She is even a good cook.

Therefore, you see, dear proper men and matrons, to call Marie a pattern of a well-bred young lady is but to do her justice. Neither must you believe that when we were together we had nothing to think of but kisses and caresses. Indeed between-whiles we would often discuss the deepest and most serious matters.

Amongst others we one day discussed the reason why most women are so irritating.

On this my wise Marie said :—

‘In my opinion it is because women, as a rule, think too much of themselves, just because they are women. Thanks to you silly men, with your servile adoration of women, merely because they are female, they have really come to think that they are the special favourites of nature, miraculously endowed with beauty, wit, and charm. They are nearly bursting with conceit. Take for example my cousin Amalia. She is ugly as a toad, sour as a crab-apple, ignorant as an old shoe. Yet as a representation of “the sex beautiful” she considers herself far more important than the nicest and most charming man. On account of this supposed beauty of her sex she exacts the adoration and, on

account of its weakness, the gallant attention of all mankind. Of course she is a monster, but she is hardly an exception; there are indeed many just as bad; for as a general rule women are really more stupid and plainer than men. It must be clear to any one who will open his eyes and ears. If you only knew how ashamed a woman who thinks differently feels when men at dinner-parties propose their high-falutin toasts to a lot of fat, tight-laced females or well-padded broomsticks, who without the faintest blush swallow all the nonsense and seem to enjoy it. Yes, even the most charming women become intolerable when they are possessed by this demon of conceit. As soon as a woman, young or old, pretty or plain, begins to reflect upon the wonderfulness of being a woman, she ought to be whipped.'

When Marie, flushed and eager, had finished this lecture, I asked her: 'And are you not just the very least bit conceited, Marie?'

'Yes,' she answered, and came closer to me. 'I am conceited because you love me.'

So wisely would Marie think and speak. Who will dare call her wanton after this.

YET there were some points on which even XVI my wise Marie was foolish. On these I had to enlighten her. Recognising that I completely lacked the power of falling seriously in love, we always believed that our relationship would last but a short time, and it happened

therefore one day that we discussed Marie's possible marriage to another. Most impressively did I beg Marie to be a good and loving wife to her future husband, and never to be untrue to him except when I was concerned. For this was the one certain fact, the unshakable basis of Marie's life, that her Creator had made her for me, and that at all times mine was the first right—a right which no one could ever dispute or annul.

This Marie understood, and in this we were at one. She knew that it could never be otherwise. But she was not quite sure whether or not she ought to tell her husband about our relationship. Was it not her duty to let him know that she was not the pure girl he might perhaps imagine her to be?

I felt sure that Marie had asked this question in all good faith. Like many another weak soul, she had been led astray by those quack moralists who are flourishing nowadays. The greater the necessity to have a serious talk with her.

'You silly little child,' I said. 'Can't you see what foolishness you talk? Of course, Marie, if you marry a man who is hard and who treats you badly, then—as a revenge—tell him that you have had a real lover, a lover who spoiled you in every possible way, and who taught you the joy of love. But to tell this to a brave and good fellow, who has done his utmost to make you happy, imagining himself the first and only one in your life—how could you have the heart to do that? You would wound him more

cruelly than his bitterest foe. I am assuming that he loves you—assuming, too, that you would tell him the entertaining story before the wedding. Well, then, he would either bid you good-bye and his unhappiness would come that way, because he loved you; or he would—what is most probable—still make you his wife, and at the same time make a hell of his own life; a hell of gnawing doubts and suspicions. You might treat him ever so sweetly, and be ever so faithful, you might even give me up—it would be all in vain. Your wicked confession would be for ever laughing at him from some corner of his heart, freezing his happiness with its icy mockery. “She has had a lover before, has she forgotten him? Is she still longing for him? Or if she has given him up, is she longing for another?” No, Marie, you are talking nonsense, and I warn you to beware of the false prophets who are crying “Truth” in the market-places. Truth is a two-edged sword which it is wisest to keep in its scabbard, and which, left in careless hands, causes more mischief than all the thundering lies ever told. I don’t say lie, but I do say keep silent, and I would add that if you are forced to speak, then consider bravely and lovingly which will do the most good, the plain truth or some trifling invention.’

Thus I preached the true law of love to Marie. She listened attentively, and did not fall asleep till quite a long time after I had finished.

XVII **S**OMETIMES we helped each other to an understanding in some such way as this.

One evening, after I had helped her off with her stockings, Marie said: 'I have often wondered how it is that I have never felt ashamed before you.'

'Why should you be ashamed? You love me, don't you?'

'Yes, of course, that is the first and important reason. But it is not all. No, you—yourself, have helped me a good deal. Much more than I think you know of.'

'How?'

'Because you have always treated me with such sweet respect. You have never looked at me with greedy eyes or touched me with insolent hands. You have never made me think of you as a male. And yet—thank Heaven—a man you are.'

'What you are saying, Marie, is perhaps true enough. But if we are quite to understand why you have never been ashamed with me, there is another point to be considered. Tell me honestly: had you not been so sure of your own loveliness; if, for example, you had suffered from any hidden defect, would you in that case have been equally frank? Of course you wouldn't. If your body from top to toe, inside and out, had not been so fair, so sweet and shining, then you would have been ashamed. First of all you loved me; then I was not exactly a ruffian, and in addition you were in every way the most beautiful little Sunday-

girl—even on week days—and that is why you were not ashamed.'

Of which the sad moral is that to be safe, virtue should go hunch-backed.

NOTHING in Marie was ugly, and everything XVIII she did fulfilled the law of beauty. She was a great comfort to irritated nerves. After all, how little real attention women pay to beauty. One woman has no control over her voice, but lets it out like a trumpet. Another neglects her walk and wears boots with crooked heels. One bites her nails, another scratches her head with her crochet-needle.

I could not live a month with such a woman without hurting her. A lady, of whom I was very fond, once killed an insect with her coffee-spoon. By Heaven! I needed all my self-control not to slap her in the face.

With Marie I am safe. She is like a quiet summer evening, soothing and exciting at the same time. Sweet harmonies of peace fill one's soul, everything seems bright and lightsome, worries vanish from the brains like clearing mists, courage and hope expand the heart. When Marie laid her hand on my brow she swept away all my troubles, and life lay before me as on some quiet summer evening, rich in beauty and peace. Never has she set a nerve shrieking with pain or anger or disgust. Like heavenly manna did she refresh me. Like God's own blessing did she come to me.

Yes, Marie, you pleased me so entirely that I always thought you beautiful. Yes, even that time when you suffered so terribly with a bad cold, that you scarcely dared show yourself.

Perhaps you were not very pretty. If so, I never noticed it. I only knew that it was all my earthly joy to hold you in my arms and to kiss you—then, as at all times.

Fancy! even then I did not understand how it was with me. Now I can say from a wider experience: that when a man's love is proof against a bad cold, he can be sure of his love.

XIX **I** UNDERSTOOD nothing. I am one of those calculating natures that know exactly how far they will go, and who say 'stop' as soon as they have reached the limit, but who, after having made the make-believe offering to prudence, do not mind beginning all over again, this time to continue—beyond all bounds.

There were no lack of omens and signs, which might have told me my fate. But I said to myself: You are not superstitious, what do you care about the rubbish the finger of fate is writing on your wall?

And as yet the night was far away when Babylon was to be destroyed.

XX **I** HAVE reached the boundary! I am looking backwards; my eyes are wandering over a spring landscape steeped in soft and tender colours.

In the gardens the dazzling white and pale pink flower domes of the fruit-trees are arched against the blue sky. Slim green shoots are peeping forth from the black mould, and the fields and the meadows are glistening with soft silky grass, amongst which white and yellow flowers sip the rays of the sun. At the gate stands a slender young girl in a blouse shining like silk, over which the fruit-trees sprinkle their blossoms. She bows and smiles to me, she calls me, waving her hand.

I am sure it is Sunday, for the air seems filled with the song of church bells. Or is it nature awakened and uplifting a morning hymn to Heaven?

I cover my eyes with my hand. I can no longer bear to look over that wonderful spring landscape, which I am going to leave behind.

When again I gaze over the country it is wrapped in a grey mist. The shivering fruit-trees bend their flower arches to the ground and a black shadow steals the brightness from the meadow.

My eyes wander to the young girl in the flowered blouse. She stands with drooping arms; she does not feel the rain which is falling, nor the wind which sweeps through her thin dress. She looks at me with big eyes. She is crying.

Yet my heart was hardened. Marie's tears did not stop me. I had reached the boundary and I went.

XXI **M**ARIE cried.

I have seen women cry before. As a rule their tears leave me cold and indifferent, sometimes they make me hard. They flow too easily and their source is seldom deep and pure. There are women who weep only with their eyes, weep only because their lachrymal glands have become inflamed. And there are other women whose tears mean only obstinacy and vanity, bad temper and bad manners.

But Marie's tears came from her heart, and never have I seen a woman cry so beautifully. Her weeping was not marred by anger or lamentation, it was unaccompanied by whine or complaint. At first her tears fell sparingly, they forced their way in heavy drops, for Marie—with an effort which shook her whole body—fought to keep them back. But when at last she had to give up the struggle, they came rich and powerful as from a newly-opened spring.

From Marie I learned to understand that in tears there may be blissful healing for all wounds. Like a soft rain Marie's tears flowed soothingly over her burning despair and turned it into a gentle sorrow.

A sorrow so gentle that it even forgave the sinner whose hard heart was its cruel cause.

Forgave me? yes, even more than forgave.

XXII **S**TERN readers! I can see you frown. Forgive, well that might pass. But even more! Impossible! Surely Marie could not stoop so low as that.

Marie, gracious one, step forth and teach these poor ignoramuses the gospel of love. Teach them that true love is set high above pride and honour, and that it cannot stoop at all. Love makes no question of thine and mine, it knows no difference between good and evil, between worthiness and unworthiness.

When Marie lay crying in my arms she knew only that she loved me, that she saw me perhaps for the last time and that not a moment was to be lost. Marie has never given me more passionate kisses than those which burned through her tears. These kisses were like the farewell of the sun before he vanished into the night.

THEN we said good-bye to each other, quiet XXIII and self-controlled.

Again I preached the gospel of love to Marie, and again she admitted that I was right.

I said that as we must part some day it was better to do so before we grew tired of each other. 'Before you are tired of me,' she suggested. 'No, not that only,' I continued. 'For the day will come when your love will fade too.' She smiled incredulously, but with a little nod she said, 'Perhaps so.'

I spoke like a merchant to his thoughtless partner. I took out the day-book and ledger. I proved clearly and logically that we had started out on a dangerous enterprise, and that it would end with failure if we continued. Better to stop before the

play became serious, for we had never meant to hurt each other. Life is far from finished for either of us. Each in our own way will seek the haven in which to rest. Our love has been a pleasant trip; it was only meant for a holiday. It has left us a store of bright and pleasant memories; memories which both of us will cherish. We do not really part. These memories will still bind us to each other. In them we shall go on meeting still.

I was convinced by my own eloquence. When the door had closed upon Marie, I hadn't the least doubt that all was over between us.

XXIV ALL over!

A I have always loved these words. They have always sounded to me like a triumphant fanfare. Something is finished, something new is beginning.

Over! There is no anxiety any longer, no more hesitation. Over—that's all! Order once more, all one's affairs straight again, and the chance to start afresh. Away with the old scruples and worries; away with all these doubts and difficulties which hung like a heavy knapsack on one's shoulders. Oh, what a relief! what a blessing it is to be able to stretch one's limbs free from all burden.

Over—do you hear? Over! Blow it gaily to the four winds. Over, over, over!

The fanfare had sounded, and it was evening. I sat alone in the autumn twilight, gazing into the

stove. The fire was nearly dying, but the evening being warm, there was no need to put more coals on. Quietly I watched the flames dying away. Like leaves in the wood the pieces of coal fell rustling together, black death forced his way deeper and deeper into the fire, methodically he marched from piece to piece, until the last embers were buried in the collapse of the entire heap.

All over! The words sounded again in my ears, no longer gaily, but sadly and sorrowfully. I went on sitting there, while the darkness gathered round me and I thought.

The fire in my room is put out, the fire which never caused me pain, but only brought me comfort and joy. My willing fire, which blazed hotly, crackled merrily or smouldered gently, just as I wanted it; my sweet, my beautiful fire is no more. It is dead, and I myself have put it out. And am I sure that I shall ever find a better? Dare I hope that another fire is burning for me somewhere in the world? Ah, call the fire back again! Throw open the gates for it, and you need not doubt but that your faithful fire will return; it only needs your breath to call it back to life.

I jumped up. I lit candles and lamps. Again I heard the triumphant fanfare! You are not made to long and to mourn. What has happened was bound to happen. You are free, free!

It is all over!

XXV I WAS free!

Marie was no longer part of my life. Only a few days ago, and yet how far away it all seemed. Her name had a strange sound, her face was a vague memory.

I was free, and many other lovely girls were alive in the world. What was this folly which had taken hold of me? Marie—a pretty little girl like a thousand others. A good, bright little girl, nothing more. Yes, of course, she was very much in love. But every young girl is in love with the man who awakens her senses. I am not yet *passé*. Other sweet, good girls will fall in love with me, if it is love I want.

Thank goodness the bond was broken, and only just in time. For the first time I fully realised what danger we had been in. In spite of all my prudence we had become perilously sentimental. When a little girl has stolen her hand round a man's heart, then let him have a care. The hand is so soft and warm, it feels as though a tiny child were nestling there.

How easily it all happens! Bless my soul, had not my weakness grown out of nothing more important than the trifling accident of Marie wearing a simple flowered blouse at our first meeting, a blouse on which she had spilt some drops of wine. Of course she had looked sweet in her vexation, which she had tried in vain to hide. She was not far off crying, just as though she had been a little girl who did not dare go home to her angry

mother because she had broken the plate on the top of her father's dinner. Yes, you were in a sad scrape, Marie, you lovely child in the flowered——

Enough with flowers and sentimental nonsense. Have I not forgotten Marie?

YES, and I enjoyed my liberty.

XXVI

Politeness bids me be considerate to women and prudence counsels me to be careful. Yet there is a question burning on the tip of my tongue, and out it must, whatever terrible consequences it may bring upon my sinful head.

What, may I ask — what is the truth about woman's virtue, that famous woman's virtue? I know—or I was taught—that there are few women who step aside from the narrow path of virtue; the only path which leads to heaven and matrimony. But I know also that men, however much they may be in want of money, need never be in want of love. God, and every one else, knows, that in this morganatic town there are to be found men who are masters of harems, which even the Grand Turk would not be ashamed to own. I have sought for an explanation in my historical reading. I had thought that perhaps the ladies' light cavalry might use the same stratagem as the soldiers of the famous hero, whose tiny regiment seemed to be a mighty army, because each soldier quickly moved from post to post. But I had to abandon this explanation, which sprang from true reverence for the virtue of women. For if such were the case, then the great

body of the masculine troop would be left to themselves on these great days of battle, when every regiment is under fire at once. But I have never heard that this has happened. The riddle remains unsolved. I have asked again and again, but I have never received an answer.

I enjoyed my liberty, as well as a man can in a virtuous town. I have no reason to complain.

There was no need to advertise my liberty. The rumour was soon abroad. For a long time my staircase had been quiet. Now there was a pitter-patter of old friends and new, all coming affectionately to ask how the man with the newly-won liberty was getting on. And there were rejoicings day and night—in honour of my freedom.

XXVII **I** DON'T mention these rejoicings out of conceit, but because they are an important factor in this legend of Marie.

An author less honest and less conscientious would draw the curtain over the events of this period. I know some dear comrades who in a like case have not hesitated to pretend that their infidelities were but desperate attempts at finding forgetfulness in dissipation.

I did not wish to forget—I had forgotten.

Where was Marie? How should I know? Weeks had gone and I had neither seen nor heard of her. I confess I had expected a letter. Experience has taught me that one's lost loves, even when they have said the last definite good-bye,

always discover that there is still one thing or another on their minds, which they must let out in letters. But round Marie there was the silence of the tomb. From her at all events a little post-script would have been welcome; but, after all, it was best so. Evidently she had forgotten me, as I had forgotten her. Indeed, I had hardly time to think of her, so taken up was I with gaiety and—work. For sometimes even I work, too. On what?

My work is to build lovely dream castles, to create beautiful women, to make colours out of words, and poems of the colours.

But first and foremost I enjoyed myself—just because I had forgotten Marie!

FORGETFULNESS! dear bird with the soft XXVIII
black wings, shadow the couch where Marie has rested. Keep watch over my dreams lest they call her up again in all her naked loveliness. Soothe my longing with your song, lest it should once more awake.

Marie is no more, do you hear me—spirit of forgetfulness? She must no longer exist. But your hollow eyes are glaring mockingly at me. Do you doubt me? Are you forsaking me?

Faithless bird! You must not betray me, my forgetfulness! at least not now when night is here, with her seductive thoughts and painful imaginings, flickering above my sleepless rest. In the day-time I need you not—for the sunshine keeps all phantoms at bay—but do not leave me now that it is night.

Forgetfulness! No, you shall not escape me. Though I tear my hands on your sharp claws, I will force your cool wings down on my burning head.

I had no idea it was so difficult to forget!

XXIX I AM at my window looking out into the white evening. The first snow has fallen. There is snow on the pointed gables of the old houses, and the bridge stretching across the black water in the canal is white. The ships in the harbour look fantastic with their thick masts of cotton-wool and their crystallised rigging glittering with a million points of light. The streets are still and solemn, not a soul to be seen. But the old houses with the white pointed gables are lit up. In some of the windows the lights are softened by crimson curtains, while through others I can see straight into the rooms. There, a family is gathered for supper; here, a young girl is seated at the piano.

I am resting my head on my hand, and my thoughts are wandering hither and thither. I know not what I am thinking, but my heart is hammering away in uneven measure, hammering so loud that I can hear the throb of its beating right up in my head.

Then some one starts playing on a concertina. The music comes from one of the ships. I catch a glimpse of a dark figure on a white deck, a figure which leans forward, slowly moving its arms out and in.

The first notes are false and harsh, but after a

little while the music improves. A concertina never sounds so well as on the water in the open air, with the skies above and the deep stillness of nature around. Then no other instrument can so faithfully express the sigh of the lonely heart for the home that is far away, for the father, the mother, and the sweetheart. The concertina should be played by strong, tanned hands. It holds no more subtle poetry than that of a seafarer's heart, throbbing with the simplest joys and sorrows.

The music trembles through the quiet evening. It confides its troubles as openly as a child, and every one can understand the unhappiness it sings. The tune comes to me like a song with the simplest words:—

‘I was alone in a foreign land, where they speak a language strange to me. I walked the big city amid thronging people, who had no care for me. I knew no place where I could feel at home, so I went to the public-house with the other fellows. There were lots of girls who smiled on me and wanted to get hold of me, because I had money in my pocket, and was big and strong. They drank with me, and one of them sat on my knee and called me her dearest friend. I got drunk and went with her; she took all my money, but gave me no joy. There is only one in this world who makes me happy, and she is many, many miles away. I betrayed my own little girl, and I am returning poor to her. I am amongst strangers who don't care for me, and I am crying because

my own girl is far away, and perhaps has taken another sweetheart, while I have been betraying her.'

No, I won't listen any more to that stupid music. What on earth has this sailor and his lamentations to do with me? Let him cry over his concertina, but spare me from translating his ding-dongs into words. I don't want to be melancholy. My purse and my heart are still safe; women cannot take more from me than I want to give them.

I went out to the square, where beneath the electric lights the girls promenade around the old stiff-legged statue, like the horses in a merry-go-round. I chose the prettiest and took her with me. She was a good soul, eager to please me, and grateful to be in a warm, comfortable room with a man who treated her gently.

But she gave me no joy, and while caressingly she leant against me and begged me to say that I loved her a little, my heart was crying, because—because I had foolishly listened to a sailor who played on his concertina!

XXX **E**VERY morning a curiously restless feeling hunts me out. I go roaming about town without any object whatever, street up, street down. I favour most the streets where the young women go shopping.

Though quite without reason I am always in a hurry, as if I feared to be too late. The fact is, I don't want to be stopped by friends—don't want to speak to any one. I want to be alone. I keep

watching the passers-by, but I recognise no one. Often I find myself glaring rudely at ladies I know, without bowing to them. I am like a dog who has lost his master. Now, thinking he is on the right track, he hurries on gladly, and now he is fussing helplessly about with nose to the ground.

Whenever in the distance I see a tall, slender girl with a boa twined round her neck, I am off like a shot. I rush along, pushing people right and left, until breathless I reach her and discover my mistake. Once I ran after a cab all the way to a remote suburb, only to see a withered old maid step out. It was a blue waterproof which had deceived me.

Every day, when tired and disappointed I return home, I resolve afresh that this game must come to an end.

But the following morning the restlessness is upon me again, and I hasten out once more as though afraid to be too late.

WHY am I seeking Marie? What do I want XXXI
with her?

Take her back? Commence it all over again?

No, certainly not. That story is told, and there is no sequel.

I only want to see her, to know that she is alive. As soon as I have exchanged two words with her, my wish will be satisfied and my soul will be at peace. But this death-like silence that has grown up between us disturbs and worries me.

Why has she never written, the cruel, wicked girl? If she has done it out of calculation, then woe to her. She shall not die in sin. I will have my revenge; I will invent the most dreadful torture. How delightful to see her slender body tremble in terror—to see her pleading eyes, yet know no pity.

Yes, to make you suffer, Marie! But afterwards to cover you with kisses, fold you shivering in my arms, and with tenderest kisses sweep away all sorrow from your soul. Or can it be that she has forgotten me? Impossible! No affectionate young girl could forget so soon. No, Marie will never forget. Has she not given herself into my bondage? Have I not taken oath of her every sense, her every thought, that she would be mine, mine to my last hour, mine when and where I would?

Then, why not write to her? Let her hear her master's call and she will come back!

No, and no again! What should I do with her when she came? I don't want her! No, I don't want her!

But why then all these dreams? Away with them. Let the dead be dead. Plant a rose-tree on its grave—and forget.

XXXII I AM sitting here forgetting. All around me come the sounds of laughter, the shouts of merriment, silly words and fine words of women feasting. My eyes fall on white arms, red lips, and heaving bosoms. There is feasting at my

house, madder and more magnificent than ever before. I look on smiling, while the noise grows ever louder. Gaily passing before me comes a dancing chain of women, who laughingly form their lips for kisses and drink my health, as they whisper in my ear that they love me

The dancing chain has gone dancing by. I am left alone, forgetting. Forgetting all the gaiety, forgetting all the fair faces, forgetting everything except that Marie was not there.

Forgetting that also, as the days go by.

AND new grass was beginning to grow on the XXXIII grave.

Then it happened that one morning I crossed the square. It was terrible weather. The storm swept round the statue, where in the evenings the girls take their places in the merry-go-round, the wet snow drifted through the dense dark air. I forced my way through the storm, when suddenly a gleam of spring brightened the way before me, A pink flower in a hat. The hat on a tall, slender girl. Marie! Yes, Marie! We stood in front of each other in the middle of the square, where the weather raged its worst. We stood face to face, wet and burning with rain and wind—stood and laughed.

What did we care about the weather? Was it cold? Was it stormy? Did it still go on snowing? All I knew was that we had the big square all to ourselves, that there in front of me was the sun

shining out of the loveliest of all eyes, and spring bringing back the roses to the bonniest cheeks in the world. We laughed as if we should never stop, so heartily, so merrily, so absolutely without reason. What am I saying! without reason? Ah, no! never has laughter had a better reason. We laughed and we asked all at once! 'Where have you been? I thought you were dead.' 'And what about you? I thought you had left town.' 'But why did you not write?' 'Because you had forbidden it.' 'I had quite forgotten that.' Then we laughed again.

Now I can hear my stern censor ask: And when you grinning idiots had finished laughing, I hope you went each your own way!

My gracious, no! we went home together!

XXXIV **M**ARIE was with me once more. But not exactly as before. To begin our old relationship all over again was impossible—on that we were agreed. Those days when Marie was in very truth my little girl had passed for ever, and of course Marie was perfectly right when she said that, quite apart from all common sense had to say, it would be silly to expose herself over again to the chance of misery, now that she had gone through all the wretchedness of parting, and after an heroic struggle, had conquered her own heart. She finished up with my own pretty words, 'that we must never harm each other for the world.'

That we would never do, that we promised each other most solemnly.

Now whenever we met we were no longer bound to each other. We did not make engagements long beforehand. If we did not meet we took it for granted, and when we did it was like two old friends who by chance spend a jolly evening together. We would realise the golden idea of liberty and irresponsibility.

In this new rôle Marie charmed me completely. She talked like a book—so logical, so incontrovertible. It was just so I wanted her to be, now, when in reality I had done with her, and yet valued her too much to quite lose sight of her.

Other women, women for whom love is not a natural gift, women in whom the love-instinct is blunt and merely made up of a lot of silly sentimental theories, would not have acted so cleverly. They would have thought: Now that he is once more dangling on the hook, is the time to advance one's claims. Wrapped in their precious cloak of female dignity, they would have forced me to purchase every concession by a new charter—and I would have told such mercenary creatures to go to Jericho.

Marie was neither dignified nor mercenary. She held out to me a basket filled with rich fruits and fragrant flowers, begging me to choose freely, and she was happy when I wanted to be refreshed. Her basket was more beautiful and more tempting than ever it was before.

XXXV **M**ARIE had grown more subtle. When I left her, she was as she came to me, a lovely blossom from Nature's hand. A flower is beautiful, it cannot help being beautiful, but it does not know its own charm. Joyfully it unfolds its petals when the sun smiles upon it, but at any touch of the cold wind it shrinks up frightened and makes itself as tiny as it can. Marie was a girl who loved without knowing the art of love.

What is the wonderful magic wand which changes the wild rose into a gorgeous La France? Marie, found again, had developed into a clever woman, who fully understood her own beauty, who knew how to express her personality in many a subtle variation. Was it really you, my shy little ignorant girl, who now entered my room radiant and triumphant, like a princess clothed in rustling silks, bringing with you a heavy hothouse perfume?

Marie, you were lovely in all this splendour. But loveliest because behind all the subtle and piquant manners gleamed the one simple tint of my wild rose, through the scented hothouse atmosphere waved the sweet cool fragrance of your own nature.

XXXVI **M**Y gorgeous Marie! Forgive me, but I cannot help smiling when I think of what a gorgeous lady you were, and how sure you were of yourself. You were even, I think, just a little bit overawed by your own splendour. I smile

now as I have often smiled before, when you came in silken froth and foam and settled down in my old easy-chair. With your nose in the air, you started a spiritual conversation, and called me, protectingly, 'your friend.' With pious mien your friend enjoyed your charming pose, until suddenly he would cut matters short, and regardless of her fears for her finery, carry the magnificent lady in his arms and set her in front of the mirror. There he would pluck all her feathers, nor rest content before the splendid Marie was in nowise different from the little Sunday-girl in the flowered blouse.

MARIE'S splendour! Where did it come from? XXXVII

Due partly from anxiety, partly to ill-concealed jealousy, I behold this question written full in the face of the reader.

I could very easily answer these inquisitive questions with some fine fairy tale. I could, for example, say that Marie had come into a legacy from some rich uncle in Australia, or that she had won a big prize in some lottery.

I could say that she had received an annuity from the Government, an annuity which she had indeed earned far more than the women who dabble in literature, and who are supported by the State though they have never served poetry half so well as Marie.

However, in regard to Marie's money matters I prefer to leave the readers in ignorance after all; it

is her own affair. As far as I am concerned they can think what they please, think, if they like, that she stole, or that she earned her living in any other criminal way. Or they can—if they are magnanimous—think that Marie, now she had grown to womanhood, received more pin-money from her parents—parents who though they had been rather stingy to her of old time, were indeed very well off.

XXXVIII I THINK that according to good literary usage, I ought really to have introduced Marie's parents to the reader, told him all their faults and their general characteristics. But it is rather late now; besides, why should I give offence to these most respectable people, who, after all, have very little to do with the story.

There is, however, some one else, whom I am bound to introduce. That is Marie's admirer.

I knew Marie's admirer, and could therefore easily give a minute description of him. Indeed, I am going to tell you something about him, though I must commence with the remark that most of it is, of course, sheer invention. For how could I possibly mention the man by his right name and profession, give the address of his tailors, or the number of his freckles? But one of my good friends, a refined arbiter of taste and a well-known critic, assures me that authors ought not to be allowed to cheat their readers out of such information concerning the position *et cetera*, of the people who figure in their stories.

I would inform you then, that Marie's admirer was a much respected manufacturer. I choose this description for him because he will then at once have the sympathy of all novel readers; and I want to treat this poor fellow nicely, for he is in my power, and I might, without running any risk, turn him into a scamp or a devil; but I choose manufacturer, for this reason also, that of all others this is the most elastic way of making money. One can manufacture sun-blinds and cheese, margarine and oil-paintings, sandals and newspapers, torpedoes and nurses.

Marie's admirer then was a manufacturer; he was neither old nor young, but a man in his prime, with a promising past, a secure present, and a future rich in possibilities. Altogether a man whose offer was well worth consideration.

AFTER seriously thinking the matter over, we XXXIX came to the conclusion that Marie ought to accept the offer on the condition that the engagement should be kept a secret, and that for the present there should be no talk of marriage.

This arrangement we sealed with many kisses, after which I proposed the toast of the engaged couple and made the following speech to Marie: 'When at length you are married, Marie, then remember that next to me you owe your good husband faith and obedience. Be faithful as long as you possibly can, even though your husband should keep mistresses by the dozen. And if

fidelity prove too heavy a burden for you, then remember that you are the guardian of your husband's honour, and I beg of you take care that this is not publicly injured.

‘For there is this enormous difference between a wife's and a husband's infidelity—that the faithless husband does not harm the wife, while her adultery, should it become known, makes her husband ridiculous. No doubt it is stupid and unjust, but it cannot be helped; it has been so through all the ages and will go on being so as long as marriage exists, and perhaps it is not so stupid after all, for the wife's infidelity bears fruit within the home, the husband's outside.

‘Shame on the women who thus make their husbands the laughing-stock of the town!

‘But not a whit better, Marie, are those, who, without being actually faithless, show themselves in society, at theatres, in public thoroughfares, surrounded by a troupe of admirers, while the husband walks behind like a molly-coddle.

‘There is no excuse for them whatever. Even the silliest fool is too good to be made ridiculous by the woman whose children bear his name.

‘Such women ought to be tied to the whipping-post, every one of them.’

So severely did I lecture Marie on behalf of her future husband.

AT first I had only the kindest feelings for Marie's *fiancé*. He did not trouble me. Of course the day would come when Marie would be his. Yes, but now she was mine, and when I had done with her—why! then I would even give him my blessing into the bargain!

But it happened that the manufacturer became possessed by a high and mighty demon, and that he wanted to show his power over Marie. He, who ought to have stood modestly in the background, began to domineer, as if he were already her lawful master. He watched her jealously, he even dared to spy on her, and he would come to her with mysterious hints and threats, which she understood to refer to me.

In fact he succeeded so well as to frighten Marie. One day she declared that she dared not come and see me any longer. She was afraid of her manufacturer, who was known to be of a brutal disposition.

Then my patience was at an end, and I spoke to Marie as an angry and sorrowful prophet might speak to a renegade disciple: 'Who,' I asked, 'is your master, he or I? Who has made you happier than any other girl on earth? Who has led you into the promised land of love? Marie! Marie! would you turn from me, forgetting all I have done for you? But let me warn you, that if you break the oath that you have sworn to me, me, your master, to whom you belong, and from whom you cannot escape, then I will curse you and drive you

out of my house. The scourge of my curse will be over your head for ever. Now choose as you think best. Choose between the manufacturer and me.'

Marie wept bitterly as she faced my just wrath, she blamed her own weakness and implored me not to send her away.

I forgave Marie and led her with much honour to my couch. But in my heart I swore merciless revenge on her audacious suitor.

XLI **I**N my meadow runs a white hind. She is tame and more lovely than any other hind in the woods. She eats out of my hand, and the moment she hears my voice she comes to me.

There are many hinds wandering near my meadow. I coax them to enter and invite them to grass. But as soon as they scent the trace of the white hind they grew timid, and when, at the edge of the wood, I catch a glimpse of my white hind standing with listening ears, and an inquiring look in her eyes, then I hunt all the others away.

My meadow belongs to the white hind, and she belongs to me. She is my love, my joy. She watches eagerly for me; she eats out of my hand.

My white hind is free to play in the woods and over strange meadows, but should it ever happen that a huntsman would try to catch you, should it happen that a huntsman would tempt you from my meadow and set you in his own, and teach you to eat out of his hand—then, my white hind, would I prove that you are mine, I would tear you from

his grasp at the very moment he made sure of his prey.

MARIE, my white hind, I am grateful to you XLII for keeping a brave heart during these days of trial. Quite indifferent to danger, you played between your suitor's snares and my meadow. He threatened and he tempted, but just as he thought that at last you were caught in his toils, you would hurry away to eat out of my hand.

Did you feel any remorse or anxiety, I wonder, over your double-dealing? I am sure you did, when you were away from me. Indeed your letters told me so. You bade me set you free. Or you bade me command you to let him go. But once you were safe in my home, with your head resting on my knee, all trouble and terror were banished from your soul. Here was peace, here you felt with a blessed certitude was the only happiness on earth. We two alone. We missed nobody, cared for nought else. What mattered the rest to us. Let them fight and struggle in the world, let them laugh or cry, let them wear themselves out with hatred and despair.

Here was a holy place, an hour of bliss, shining through this vale of tears.

But I remember, too, Marie, how you would shiver and tremble as you left me in the dark night. I remember the lingering glance of mute despair with which you used to say good-bye to my rooms.

Why did I never ask you to stay?

Ah! I did not know the wonderful secret which was hidden like a miser's treasure in my heart, the secret you had guessed, and which comforted you in those days of trial.

XLIII I ONLY knew that like a king I sat with my most precious treasure in my hand. The treasure was in my hand, and I was king. I could use it or give it away, just as my royal mood prompted me.

Proud and haughty I kept my treasure, held it up triumphantly before my eyes and said: 'Truly this treasure is rare, and woe to him who dare rob me of it. It belongs to me by the grace of God, and I need not make account for it to any one. I delight in this treasure, and it pleases me to enjoy it. But perhaps to-morrow it shall please me to throw it away, for I am king, and rich is my treasury.'

Thus, like a haughty king, I held Marie in the hollow of my hand. Confident in my right as her master, I amused myself with her, insolently I would set her free to delight all the more in winning her back again. I knew that when I said, Come, she came, and when I said, Go, she went. But I did not know that the day should dawn when in fear and distress I would forget all pride and cry, Stay with me, my rarest, my only treasure.

I HELD the treasure in my hand!

XLIV

It happened late one evening that I passed by a big restaurant. The rooms on the first floor were brilliantly lighted, and through the open windows came the sound of dance music.

Suddenly I remembered that Marie had been invited to a ball for this evening, and that the ball was to take place in these rooms. So now, at this moment, she was dancing there! dancing with the manufacturer, who, I was sure, looked proud and pompous, because every one could see that Marie was his.

Ah, don't be too sure, my good friends; at this very moment my revenge shall strike you—you who dare to dispute my right to Marie.

I enter the restaurant, ask for pen and paper, and write: 'I will not allow you to be with him any longer. Say that you are ill, and come to me. I am sick with longing for you. If you love me you will come.'

A footman promises for love and money to carry the letter safely to Marie, while I return home. I make the rooms look pretty. I am not in the least restless, for I know she will not fail me, and indeed, scarcely have I finished my preparations, before a carriage drives up to my door, from which steps a lady dressed in white.

She stands in my room with heaving bosom, and hand pressed against her throbbing heart. A lovely vision! A lovely foam-clad Naiad! Her dress made of layer upon layer of white gossamer,

thin as a spider's web, falls round her in froth-like waves, looking as if it would fade away at the softest touch. Yes, a dream-vision she is, and Marie, herself, thinks she is dreaming. She looks around her in smiling bewilderment, and says she cannot understand that she is really here, she has not the faintest idea how she got away from the ball and her suitor—she only knows that she had my letter, and could not stay.

But when the carriage has taken Marie away, I open the window and inhale the cold, rippling night-air. In the sky all the stars are lit up, and with royal arrogance I laugh up to the heavenly ball-room: 'Even if Marie were dancing there with the angels, I could force her to come to me with a word.'

XLV **A** GAIN I see the inquisitive moralists arriving with spectacles on nose and text-books in their pockets, and I hear them, after a serious consultation, give Marie an exceedingly bad character.

How could she treat that excellent manufacturer in such a wicked fashion; he, who had none but the best intentions? If she could not behave herself, it was at least her clear duty (see text-book VII., section B, paragraph 3) to break her engagement.

Poor logical moles, you should keep to your underground realm—there to your heart's content you can pass your votes of censure against the too vivid colouring of the flowers, against the too

frivolous song of the birds, which must hurt all decent and peace-loving moles. But please leave Marie alone, and don't criticise her youthful wanderings in life's labyrinth.

Marie is like a butterfly rioting in a garden. Every flower is tempting her and whispering, 'Come to me, beautiful butterfly!' Only the flower with whom the butterfly cares most to stay says, 'Don't trust me, very soon I will drive you away.'

Now I know the secret hope which Marie, in spite of all, nursed in a corner of her heart. But I know, too, that she did not dare to reckon on a hope which she feared even to confess to herself. Therefore our relationship seemed to her a happiness lent for but a little moment, a windfall of happiness quite outside life's bargain, and for which she need not make account. Afterwards she would have a long life before her in which to be an honest man's honest wife.

So without remorse, nay, with a proud sense of doing the right thing, she gave herself to me in beautiful serenity.

SOME profane authors say, 'beautiful as Sin'! XLVI
I am not profane, and I don't think they are right. Sin is hideous. Her face is distorted, her lips are white, her hands are palsied, and like a coward she prowls the world in the owl-dark night. Her evil breath poisons all the joy of life.

I know Sin; I have feasted with her. Doleful

feasts where the wine was bitter as wormwood, where horror froze one's smile, and one's blood turned to ice under the foul kisses of her corpse-cold mouth.

Yes, hideousness is the form and character of Sin.

Make Sin beautiful as Marie was beautiful, and she is no longer Sin.

XLVII **N**OW I will set the spectacles of the moralist on my own nose and look at Marie's suitor.

He was an honourable fellow. That was clear, but even had I seen the reverse, I should not have admitted it. For I have made it my duty to speak well of him.

He was an honourable fellow, and I sing his praises, because his intentions toward Marie were most proper and respectable. Yet surely, they could hardly have been anything else. I allow him every good quality except one—he was not a man.

My proof?

He clung to a woman who did not love him.

But perhaps she lied to him? Who has heard the words those two spoke to each other? Not I, of course. But I know that every true lover can distinguish between false and true love-words as easily as the diamond-merchant can distinguish real stones from imitation. Love weighs everything on the most delicate scales, never a letter, never a stroke too much.

Marie's suitor knew that Marie did not love him as surely as he knew that he loved her. Yet he

did not release her. He was content with the crumbs that fell from her lover's table.

But the man who is 'content' is not a man.

Marie is the most fascinating woman in the world, and I love her, but were I to suspect that she dreamed of any greater happiness than to be mine, then I would leave her on the instant.

I would bite off my tongue rather than beg for her love. One may go a-begging for orders and titles, for favours and wealth, but never for love.

I REVIEW those days in my memory, and they XLVIII
pass before me one unbroken triumphal
procession.

As in his eyrie, near the sky, the eagle will rest awhile, so sit I aloft in my fortified castle, but the stir and excitement of battle is tempting me afield. I sail away for foreign coasts.

I swoop down and ravage the towns of the enemy. When I return with my viking ship full of splendid spoil, the torches blaze in my castle.

Hy and halloo! The dance is merry! It is a war without fear of defeat, a feast without thought of the morrow.

It is said that the old vikings were worshipped most blindly, and most truly adored by those women whom they had stolen from foreign coasts; and I think it very likely. Every true woman dreams of a brigand who would wildly desire her and carry her away by force in his strong arms. Don't tell me those cloister legends about young

virgins who preferred prison and torture, yea, even death by their own hand, rather than endure a brigand's passionate embrace. These are tales for the nursery, not for my lady's bower, where the birds are impatient for flight. The more rudely I carried off Marie, the more intense grew her love. When she saw my ship nearing the coast she pretended to flee. It was so much more wonderful to be taken on board by force than, docile and willing, to trip up the gangway.

XLIX **T**HE torches are lit, I am expecting Marie.

I am leaning against the wall nearest the staircase; there I can hear the instant her foot touches the first step. My thoughts grow so gentle while I thus wait for Marie, whose little foot in another moment or two will be on my stairs. How many times I have sat like this, listening for the first sound of Marie's arrival, and yet my heart is beating as passionately as of old.

My sweet little girl! Ah, if you knew how I am longing for you! But you don't know it, because you always see me so self-controlled. It never dawns on you that in lonely hours your lover knows too well that vague terror which makes the heart tremble.

You dearest of all dear ones, I am a vain and obstinate fool, that I don't draw you close into my arms, lay your hand on my heart and say, 'Do you feel how restless it is here? Yes, your lover, who pretends to be so sure of you, is in fact so

little sure after all, that he is ill of anxiety every time he expects you and every time you leave him.' Marie, my blessed one, in a few moments you will enter my door, and my foolish heart will hide all its trouble. I give you many beautiful words and many true kisses, but all the anxiety in my heart I cannot confess. If only I could! How sweet it would be just once to set free all that is pent up in my heart. How sweet to tear open my bosom and without any reservation let all my longing, all my trouble, stream forth like rippling blood. I cannot do it, Marie! I am a cynic at the bottom of my heart. A vain fool! I cannot do it, I dare not do it.

The great door bangs. I start up listening. No, it is a heavy dragging footstep, not Marie's light tread.

And again I wait. But I have lost the thread of my thoughts, and now I have only one thought: Why does she not come?

If you have a lover, young maidens, take my advice, let him wait once for you in vain, but if you love him truly, don't do it more than once. If he stands this severe test, you may be sure he loves you very dearly. But if you twice make him endure the hell of waiting in vain, then he will know that you are not worthy of his love.

I am waiting, while the minutes fly like seconds. Oh, that I were able to stop the flight of time! But never has he gone so fast as now, when every passing minute robs me of hope. My heart is

struggling not to give in. With untiring eagerness it invents new explanations, new excuses. Don't worry, she will come. She has been delayed, she has forgotten the exact time, she has been detained on her way.

My heart struggles in vain. While the clock ticks on, my hope is bleeding to death, and doubt and mockery are triumphant. I curse Marie and call her a wicked false girl. The most hideous suspicion awakens in my heart, and my revengeful thoughts invent the cruelest tortures.

At last I find myself on the edge of the bed, staring in dull hopelessness through the open door into the dining-room, where the table is arranged with delicate dishes, wines, and many lights.

I rouse myself, move to the window and open it. A soft spring rain is falling through the warm and misty air. I rest my forehead against the wet window-frame. The cruel pain has gone; I am only tired, so tired, and my heart seems withered. The soft moist air brings relief. The tired withered feeling changes again into a gentle sadness, a patient longing. If you came in this moment, Marie, surely I would not harm you.

I would lay my cheek against yours, and in the mild spring night, which softens everything that is hard and frozen, I would confess to you my heart's wonderful secret even now whispering in my soul. . . . I turn round and watch, with a smile, the candles still burning on the table. Slowly I blow them out, one after the other. For a long time I

remain in the dark without thinking and without suffering, without desire, without regret, feeling only a meek longing, a tender desire to be good to Marie.

THE morning came and with it a message of L explanation, then Marie herself; and all the bewildering shadows of the night had disappeared. The explanation was as simple as could be, and it was only by mere accident that it had not reached me the evening before.

What a fool I had been, to fear that Marie would desert me. No! she was mine more than ever before. My heart swelled with joy—away with such weakness. Still I can ride, unscathed, through the battle, still victory follows my banner.

Marie, if you had seen me last night! Now you only see me as before, confident, and smiling most graciously, taking it all just for what it was—an annoying mistake. Did I play my part well? or did you suspect there was something behind, something I wanted to hide from you? Did you feel, when I held you in my arms, that my happiness was greater than I would admit? Did you see through all my cunning, I wonder, when you discovered the burnt-down candles on the daintily-laid table, and with a reproachful smile said, 'You have been sitting up late again!' And when I answered, 'Yes, I had important work to finish,' was it quite ingeniously, quite without a spice of malice that you rejoined, 'Yes, what else should have kept you up?'

LI **A**T last, as the reader may have noticed, a little excitement has found its way into this account of mine and of Marie's love. The story is fast approaching its end, and from an artistic point of view parentheses are scarcely any longer advisable.

But I am forced to stop on the road once more, for I see a great many sneering and mocking faces, which I must clear out of the way.

They are the up-to-date saints, poetry's philosophical puppies, and downy-chinned ascetics, who with indescribable scorn regard the fellow-artist who in this old-fashioned way writes about women and love. They understand far better how to fulfil the mission of modern poetry. On high-sounding adjectives they climb the stars to chat with the Almighty and dish up their celestial interview with all that obscure profundity which fills their confused head.

True poetry is that which tells every one that poetry is something much finer than ordinary human words, and these only are poets, poets with truly noble ideas, who stoop to nothing so common as to sing of two who love each other.

These young poets have made the remarkable discovery that they are moulded of too fine a clay for love. Passion is degrading for them, it distracts their minds from their high calling, and soils the virgin soul of which they seem to think heaven has such desperate need.

Let them stay among the stars, poor devils.

The fair women on earth will never miss them. But should they some day come sneaking along with their lust—so love is called in the stars—the plainest women in the slums might teach them that there is more poetry to be found in a pair of maiden eyes than in all the stars put together.

After which I continue my story about Marie.

I AM anxiously feeling my pulse. Whatever is LII the matter? What strange fluid has poisoned my blood? Fire burns in my veins, fever rages in my head. A perpetual terror has taken hold of me. During the day it robs me of all strength, so that for hours I sit idly staring in front of me. But during the night, when at last I have fallen asleep, it seems to lurk just at the back of my ears. Suddenly it will leap out and terrify me, and with a shriek I am awake.

I am ashamed of my weakness, and least of all would I confess it to Marie.

Besides, just now Marie needs to be comforted. She is not happy. In a few months' time she is going to be married. She cried the other day she was with me. I forced myself to speak encouragingly to her. Of course there was nothing new in that, we had known she was going to be married for ever so long. With such simple comforting words I dried Marie's tears. Of course I am right, she says, and she laughs with me and admits that she is a foolish child. But the moment I see Marie smile, I bring down the glass I hold in my hand so

hard on the table that it breaks into a thousand pieces. Marie looks at me amazed, but does not speak, and I laugh and laugh again. I dread that she has discovered my madness and force myself to be gay as I have never been before. Marie looks still more amazed, and when she leaves me says—I dare not ask her if she is ironical—‘How merry you have been to-day!’

Yes, I am mad! Physically nothing is wrong. I have tested my pulse again and again, its beat is normal. I eat and drink, I call on my friends and they notice nothing. My face betrays no worry, my eyes are bright. But my veins are filled with fire, and scarlet flames dance before my eyes. I am in a perpetual state of terror, and when the fear has strongest hold of my heart, I feel a terrible desire to kill. Do you know, Marie, why I jumped out of bed so suddenly last night and lit all the lights? You had murmured his name, and in the darkness my hand had sought your throat.

If only I had *him* in my hands, how it would delight me to hear the rattle in his throat, to watch his eyes turning white in death.

LIII I AM mad with jealousy. Yet why go on screening myself behind trivial words? I was mad before when in cold blood I saw Marie prepare herself to be his. My eyes, which I imagined to be clear and clever, were blinded with conceit. I was like a god who deals out fates after his own pleasure. Like Zeus, who well knowing Alcimena’s beauty, yet

with Olympic serenity lays her in Amphitryon's arms and blesses their embrace with a smile.

Poor Zeus, never to have known the greed of jealousy, your divine blood always running lukewarm and equable. You have attained your heaven; your happiness was devoured long ago, and now you are merely digesting.

But for us there is only one way that leads to happiness: intoxication. And only by storming heaven's gates can we gain admittance. For the first time in my life I am wise. Now I understand that happiness is not to be found first here and then there; it does not lie in the sipping and tasting of many cups. Happiness is a cup we empty to the last drop.

You may place a hundred goblets in a row before me and fill them with the most generous wine. I will leave them one and all untouched, for my cup is Marie. Her love is my wine of which I cannot spare a single drop.

AND she was to be his! All the beauty I had LIV
carefully cultured was to bloom for him. Her smile would brighten his table, and make every day of his week a holy day; her kisses would weave into his sleep the loveliest dreams, her young ardour would strengthen him in his work, and all the sweetness and charm of her being would bring eternal summer to his home.

His it shall be to hear her laugh or weep; in his ears she shall pour all her joys and sorrows. What

is the good of deceiving oneself? I know how it will be as soon as she is his. Of course she denies it now; she says that never, never can anything come between us. She believes for certain that she speaks the truth. But she is young, and she does not hate him. She will never deny him his rights as her husband, and the man to whom a woman gives herself must indeed be a poor creature if he cannot soon set the fire alight. After that everything will come smoothly enough. Once she is happy in his arms, she will soon hand over to him her whole individuality, her gratitude, her trustfulness, her confidence. They will sit together in the twilight, she on his knee; he will ask her about me and she will betray me: because when a woman is sitting thus lovingly on a man's knee, she will never admit that she has loved another man still more passionately. She will tell him all the bad and hateful things about me he wants to hear. His kisses will tempt her to talk, and if he doesn't seem quite contented, she will entertain him with heaps of lies.

In fancy I pass out into the street, and see the lights in their rooms. I can follow them from hour to hour; I know that now they are dining, that now she is sitting on his knee in the drawing-room, that now at last the lights are blown out . . . that now she is standing in front of the mirror with her naked arms around his neck.

And this is really to happen? She is to be his? He, who has no right in her, except what I have

given him. Now that I feel how necessary she is to me, am I meekly to carry her to his home? Rob my home to adorn his?

No—and yet. Dare I keep her back?

To-day, yes. But to-morrow—who knows what one's heart may whisper to-morrow?

FOR who knows but that one's dream-castle LV may be all fallen into ruins by to-morrow. To-day this woman is everything to you—life seems valueless without her. You are ready to fight and slay for her sake, if only you may keep her. All brightness, all joy and beauty seem concentrated in her personality. She is your sun, and with her setting all the world grows dark.

But yesterday. Think of yesterday! What was she then? A pretty toy. A sweet mistress, dearer and sweeter perhaps than any other, yet only a toy, a moment's pleasure, a fleeting summer day.

If any one had said to you then, 'Some day you will give your life for this woman,' you would have laughed in his face, and sworn your biggest oath that nothing was further from your mind.

But was she not even then as beautiful and attractive, just as good and just as much in love with you as now? Yes, certainly. She was just the same. It is your way of looking at her which has changed. Gold is gold—and through all the ages it has been beautiful to look upon. But it was not till gold was stamped into coins that it gained its high value, and if some day another

metal is chosen for coinage, then gold will be reduced once again to mere glitter.

To-day you have stamped Marie as the one woman of your life—but dare you be sure that you won't value her once more to-morrow as you valued her but yesterday: a pretty toy, a moment's pleasure, a passing summer day?

What is there to prove that you won't!

LVI **I**T is the last night, our last night. In a few hours' time Marie will go abroad to visit an aunt, and when she returns it will be to get married. I shall not see her again—she is another man's wife. If everything had been as in the old days, in the beginning of our friendship, I am sure her marriage would not have parted us. It would only have inflamed the more my passion for conquest. But now neither conquest nor booty from foreign coasts tempt me any longer. I have no wish to disturb another man's happiness and peace. My faith in happiness and all my pride are broken. Even were I again to hold happiness in my hand, I would not dare to believe in it, would not dare to hold it fast.

—It was night. All round us was solemn quiet. We lay hand in hand, each filled with our own thoughts, and staring open-eyed into the darkness. Your little warm hand, Marie, rested so cautiously in mine, it did not move at all, as if it feared to break the silence. It seemed to me as though we flew on great silent wings through space,

far away from sorrow and pain, to a sphere where time is not, where reign the dreamless sleep and the darkness that knows no fears,

For a long while we lay like this. I knew it was long, because I heard the church clock strike several times. I heard the stroke, but did not realise that they announced the passing of precious time. Then from far away I heard Marie's voice. It came to me as if carried on the soft waves of great silence. She said, 'I think it will be like this to die.' It seemed to me that I had thought exactly the same words, and I answered—I recognised my voice, but it also came from far away—'Yes, death is like this.'

Again we lay quietly. I felt Marie's hand cling closer and closer to mine as we floated higher and higher. Then I heard again Marie's voice speak to me: 'I should like to die together—with you!' But again I thought the same words, and I answered: 'When we are tired we will die together. Will you promise to come if I call you?' For answer she pressed my hand. We did not speak again, before the grey daylight broke through the night, and awakened us to the painful truth that the hour had come when we must say good-bye. . .

On that night was Babylon destroyed.

MARIE has gone away to a foreign land, and LVII
I have gone into a monastery. For many days I have not set foot outside my door. Why should I? I should not find her. I have locked

myself up in my rooms and stuck a placard with the words 'Gone away' on the door. It is no lie, for my whole soul has followed Marie.

Now and then during the first few days, I heard a creaking and clattering on my staircase; the sound stopped outside my door, and then I heard it creaking and clattering down again.

Now there is nobody who looks me up. People think I have left town and no one inquires for me.

In my silent lonely rooms, where the memory of Marie is everywhere, I have spent the time in telling the story of Marie as it is written in this book. It is not a novel artistically composed. It is only a bundle of loose leaves from a love-story for which only one art is necessary, that of being in love. It is a book about the way in which I learned that simple and yet so difficult art.

LVIII **M**ARIE, my holy one! See! a sinner is kneeling at your feet and he asks nothing. He who could never ask enough wants nothing now but only to lie at your feet and look up into your lovely face. He, the autocrat, is now the suppliant, he the disbeliever swears by your holy name! . . .

Marie, you, whose love gives me all, you, from whom flow all good gifts, only to rest at your feet and to worship your every look seems riches enough! . . .

Marie, so tenderly human, so heavenly pure, you, whose soul rises like a white dove from the passion-

fire of your body, I thank you that you taught me the unearthly happiness of earth-born love.

MARIE writes to me in a letter from her LIX foreign town: 'My dear friend, this city is great and beautiful. There are wonderful art-collections and many well-kept parks. The streets swarm with merry people and one sees something new and interesting at every step. There are, too, plenty of theatres and concert-rooms and glorious confectioners' shops! My friends are sweet to me, they take me about from one show to another, and we go to the theatre every evening.

'If you were to ask me for any minute description of my life here, it would be impossible to give it, however much I might wish to do so. I watch heaps of people and heaps of things going by, but I remember nothing of it all. I am only longing all the time for night, that I can go to bed and be alone.

'Then I lie perfectly quiet, trying to live over again the last night I was with you. But there is such a noise in the streets here. The noise sounds like the murmur from a riotous crowd of people, and through the threatening hum I hear the coachmen's angry shouting and their lashing of their whips on the horses' backs. I was afraid the first few nights. I seemed to feel these lashes in my innermost heart, and trembling, I would creep under the coverlet. But then I thought that if it were only you who tortured me to death it would not be tor-

ture at all. Willingly I would take death from your hand.

‘Do you remember our talk that last night? You see, what I promised you then, I meant. This I want you to know—before we part.’

LX I STOOD on the platform of the car. I had been standing there, wrapped in my cloak, all through the night. I had seen the evening shadows rise from the valleys, creep over the mountains and cover all in darkness. Now day is dawning, a pale light shines on the horizon, and quicker and quicker the train is hurrying on towards Marie’s foreign town, the engine keeping time with the beating of my heart.

What strange anxiety is it which has kept me awake all night? What is the meaning of all these questions, full of fear, which my heart wants answered, while I stare meditatively into the darkness.

I have no reason to doubt Marie’s love, and I doubt my own no longer.

Yet, I am going trembling to meet her, and this is the question so full of fear: ‘Won’t we feel strange to each other?’

The Marie I am travelling to find is not the Marie of old. She is not the heedless, loving child who, in former days, used to lie in my arms. She is not the merry willing mistress, my conquest, and my prey—yet, perhaps she is still both, but at the same time something greater and higher. That has

been developed in her which no doubt was always the backbone of her personality, that, which I only discovered the last few times we were together, that, which ultimately has become the beautiful sacrament I worship.

And she! How will she recognise me? I scarcely recognise myself. I won her in play, I took her with sword in hand, and we used to step off together into the lightest dance. But now I am coming to her weaponless and in earnest. Before I asked for a dance, now I ask for dear life. Before, in my sublime arrogance I was satisfied with little, now I beg in humility for everything. . . .

We rush along towards the dawning day. But suddenly it is dark as night again, with a roar the train flies through a tunnel. I feel the darkness press heavily upon my chest, my ears tingle, and half-giddy I seize hold of the railing. It seems as if the tunnel will never end, I grope about to find my way back to the carriage, where the light is burning, then—what a transformation.

The sun is rising on the purple edge of heaven—wide, wide it spreads its golden halo, pouring quivering light over glimmering, grassy valleys and dewy cornfields.

Beautiful young day! In thankful joy I kneel to you; you set me free from the dark and anguished night and lead me into new-born love for Marie.

LXI O H, to meet again !

What golden sunshine over the mountains, and what gentle tears in the peaceful valleys !

We stood opposite each other in wondering rapture, we had no words to ask or answer, but we fell into each other's arms, and with tears of joy, and faint with happiness we sang the praise of the dawning of the day. Is it not all a dream ? Is it really you and I ? We are looking at each other, but we shake our heads, we cannot believe it. And yet for the first time now it seems as if we really knew each other. This is the wonderful beauty of our meeting ; before we had met in a scarcely realised dream of happiness, now the dream has become living reality.

You lovely girl, so full of life, with such glory of joy and peace in your mischievous eyes, and with that grown-up woman's thoughtfulness on your childish brow, you are putting your arms round my neck, saying : ' So at last, in the eleventh hour, that has happened for which I never dared hope. For it is true now, is it not ? It is not something you will repent to-morrow, not something you imagine at the moment, because you have been longing for me ? '

I answer : ' I love you, as surely as I have always said too little rather than too much. I love you in joy and in sorrow, on week-days and Sundays. You are the woman I will die with, but with whom I intend first to live a long, long time. Naturally I have been longing for the caresses of my dearest

love, but still more have I been longing for all the rest that means you, your true heart, your pure thought, your gentle speech, your bright smile, which is my sun in the darkness, your faithful hand which gives me strength on the way.'

But as I tell Marie this, she bursts into tears, because she knows that I speak the truth, and because she is happy.

AT this point some one pulls my sleeve from LXII behind. I am sitting with Marie on my knee, and I ask angrily, 'Who dares to interrupt us?'

But a voice whispers: 'I am here as deputy from some of your readers. Your book which began so terribly has now struck a better vein, there are even some of us who feel tears in our eyes. But now we are so afraid that, after all, it will remain depraved. For heaven's sake marry Marie! Remember you have taken her from a man who had the most respectable intentions.'

Have no fear, my implacable censor. Marie, tell the nice lady that she can without scruple leave us alone together.

THE bishop stands in front of the altar, his LXIII golden robes vying in splendour with the shining candles. The venerable marble statues in the niches have been washed, and at the organ sits the old white-haired organist with a silk cap on his head and the grand cross on his breast. The

pews are filled with the most loving young couples in the country. They carry flowers in their hands, the young girls white roses, the young men, red. They are all looking towards the entrance-door, where twelve kind old clergymen in black velvet surplices are standing, six on either side. The organist is beginning to play, and the organ-tones roll under the high arches of the church. All the young men and maidens are standing up.

The heavy oak door is thrown open and a dazzling light fills the opening; Marie stands there in white bridal robe, with the long veil-like foam falling round her. A blushing woman with downcast eyes. A heavenly peace, a serene joy shines out from her.

An admiring whisper runs through the church, the bishop at the altar turns round and puts on his spectacles, and seeing how lovely Marie is, he hurries forward, bows to her and leads her to the altar.

The young men and maidens scatter roses before her, roses white and red. As she passes along some of the roses catch in the veil, and Marie smiles when she sees her flower-sprinkled dress.

But the old organist has stopped playing, he is leaning over the railing to catch a glimpse of Marie, and through all the peep-holes in the arches, angel faces are looking on. . . .

In the words of the Old and of the New Testament, Marie is given into my hands; I lead her out followed by the bishop, the twelve clergymen,

and all the loving young couples, while the old organist is playing with his one hand and waving to us with the other.

Outside waits the carriage with the white horses. We step in and drive to my home, to our home. Then the church-bells begin to ring.

YES, ring all bells, sing all angels! A soul is saved. LXIV

It was a very bad soul, a soul which revelled in sin and only knew repentance by name. Ring out, ring out, bells! Sing all angels. It is a very hardened sinner who is being carried up to you!

Who was it who saved him? Who is it who carries him?

A weak woman, not herself without fault and stain, but strong in her faith. Her faith guided herself and saved him. Ring, sing, now she is carrying him up—up——

Why does he not come alone? Why must she lead him?

He is still weak, and his foot trembles. But helped by her strong faith he will find the way.

Alas! he is sinking! She is not strong enough to carry him any longer.

Let the joy-music sound, that the weak woman may be strengthened, and to encourage him sing out his beloved's name.

What is the name of this faithful woman?

Marie is her blessed name. Ring it out, sing it loud! Look, he lifts his head. He grows stronger.

Now they are coming higher and higher, hand in hand. But silence! he speaks. What does he say? Hush, ye bells; be silent, ye angels. Listen to the words he is calling from the sinful earth.

He speaks the name of Marie.

But he goes on speaking. Can you hear him? Ah, sing joyfully, ye angels, ring blissfully, ye bells. He has spoken the words of redemption:

Through the many to the one.

‘GOD’S PEACE’

'GOD'S PEACE.'

5th OF JUNE.

SO I am really leaving the capital! For the last fifteen years the town has held me close. Like a vile harlot she has made me believe I could not possibly live without her poisonous, perfumed air, her luxurious leisure. I was caught in a web of a thousand threads, and I believed I was caught for good and all. In a vague way I even believed the town could not do without me. Had I not during the past years become a necessary joint in its big machinery? Did not everybody consider me part and parcel of the town, of its ever-changing life, now joyful, now mournful? My voice was heard in important discussions. I had gradually become a much sought-after helper and adviser. I was considered a trustworthy friend and an enemy to be counted with. How tired I often felt, as worn-out as an old cab horse that must be driven by the lash, but which would much prefer to fall flat in the road, to lie there quietly waiting for death and rest.

Yes, I am tired to death. Tired of pleasure and of work, tired of always having to take sides, now with this, now with that, tired of defending and

attacking. Tired to death and feeling so indifferent in my heart, yet not daring to allow the slightest sign of this to appear in work or manner.

But most of all I am tired of the eternal struggle for money. Money which must be got by hook or by crook. Money to be slaved for, to be borrowed, to be paid interest on, to be repaid, always more and more money, and always more difficult to get—a constantly growing avalanche which daily becomes more threatening, more impossible to resist, which disturbs one's work during the day, destroys one's sleep at night.

Why wonder at the more or less evident support which Socialism gains amongst people outside the labouring classes? The explanation is near at hand. What have nine out of ten of us who belong to the middle classes to lose by a revolution, by a change of the existing economic laws and rules? We are, at least nine-tenths of us, proletariats fighting a hopeless battle to make the income the community allows us balance with the expenses the same community demands of us, if we are not to be left utterly out of the running. With a very few exceptions, we all live above our means, government officials, artists and scientists, tradesmen and clergymen, actors and officers, journalists, mayors and poets. What would we lose if suddenly the great explosion came, the explosion which would startle the community out of its accustomed groove, and make spills out of agreements, bills of exchange, and I O U's. Those who live from hand

to mouth are in a way better off; their demands on life are small, and very little is expected of them. Neither is it for them to begin the movement which leads to a great revolution. It is the men from our midst who teach them to be Socialists. It is the despair in the higher classes which breeds the demands from below.

The other day I wrenched myself away from it all. I gave my affairs into the hands of a sympathetic solicitor, made an arrangement with my publisher, a man who has an amiable belief in my talent, and who is willing for a year or two to pay me a modest monthly allowance. I packed my trunk, and this afternoon, without saying good-bye to any one, I came on board this steamer which will take me to the old provincial town where I spent my early childhood. I have not seen the place for twenty years, but every time the weariness of my life overwhelmed me, I longed to go back there.

I have not wavered. The moment I decided to break away from the capital, that same moment I knew where I was going.

The old town calls me like a mother who faithfully waits at home for her far-away son. In the old town there is nothing to remind me of all I wish to get away from and to forget. The town and I only know each other from the good days when it seemed to me the greatest and the most beautiful, the object of my pride and admiration, and I was one of its most spoiled children.

It calls me like a mother. There also is the grave of my mother. It holds all the mother love I enjoyed in those days more than most children, and which I was to lose so early. Where in the world should I go but to this old town? I, who return to it, to become a child again.

ON BOARD.

II I HAVE neither slept nor been awake during the journey. I have been sitting on deck all through the warm light summer-night, letting my thoughts dreamily follow the golden track of the steamer, rocked gently by the heavy, regular beat of the machinery and the sobbing sound of the dancing waves against the sides of the steamer.

My thoughts wander back along that golden track to the life and the world in which I so lately took part. I feel already so curiously removed from it all, so strangely aloof. How indifferent, empty and unimportant it all seems to me now. And for *that* I have sacrificed fifteen of my best years. Nobody has been more eager than I, nobody a more fanatical believer. Very young I swore allegiance to the banner of my party, fought bravely and blindly in the ranks, was promoted and won pretty nearly all the distinction my ambition could expect.

I have been in the midst of battle, I have hated and worshipped, I have never broken my banner-oath, and I have never been tempted to do so. I have won friends and enemies, and done good and evil according to my judgment and conscience.

And after all what is the result? Happiness for me? Happiness for any one else? Scarcely the last, and certainly not the first. When now, of my own free will, I give up the position I have won—and which many have envied me—it is with a sincere feeling of its hopeless insecurity.

What in heaven’s name do we fight for? Why do we pursue each other, suspect and ill-treat each other, always armed to the teeth, always ready for attack? Perhaps far, far away there is a goal to reach—a higher justice, a better distribution of the boons of existence. Perhaps our children’s children may experience a new social revolution. But after all will it make mankind happier when that goal is reached, or will they press on with restless hearts and unsatisfied desires to fight and hate onwards towards a new goal? Surely. No, it is an empty illusion that happiness is to be won by strife. Only in peace, peace with oneself, peace with the world is happiness found.

To think that they are fighting on there still. The big town has not yet laid down to rest, the thousand slaves of envy and anger are still busy under the electric light of the streets, are streaming into the cafés, drinking themselves heavy and dumb to wake up to-morrow morning, after a haunted sleep, with feverish brains and bitter hearts. How can they? Why won’t they all, on some beautiful summer morn, jump out of bed with the firm resolution to cease fighting, to lay down their weapons, cool their feverish brows in the

fresh morning air, fill their bitter hearts with nature's sweet joy, and cleanse themselves from all envy and hatred, and make peace all along the line on the simple basis that we are all human creatures who don't want to hurt one another. Thus without bloodshed completing that revolution of peace which makes all other revolutions superfluous.

In this way I sit dreaming while on this lovely June night the ship carries me across the quiet sea to my old home. Like an image of my dream I saw, at sunrise, just as we passed the entrance of the fjord, a young woman stand by my side. She was tall and proud, her face shining with peace. As a vision she came, as a vision she disappeared. But if she was an omen I receive her thankfully,—an omen that I am steering the straight course for peace.

ROUGH-HILL, 6th OF JUNE.

EVENING.

III **W**E arrived in the early morning. My luggage I left on board for the present, not yet knowing where I was going to put up, and sauntered up through the sleeping town. At first it all seemed rather strange: the street I walked in had a name I did not remember, and I saw many new houses with silly, smooth, every-day faces and shop-windows of cold and heartless plate-glass.

But when I reached the square I recognised my old town.

I sat down on the flight of stone steps which

projected from the house where my childhood was spent. I closed my eyes to shut out the last seen picture, and saw in my memory a vivid picture of the square as it was years ago.

At the end of the square runs East Stream. In my memory it is not covered over as now, but runs freely through the town under bridges and through banks with leafy, knotted trees. It is full of boats and tiny craft selling fish, wooden shoes, and earthenware pots, and, all through the autumn, fruit. The square, and even the neighbouring streets, are wrapped in a delicious perfume of spicy Bergamotte pears and sweet-smelling apples.

The other end of the square is dominated by the yellow painted King's House with its castellated gables. Here it is that the town's old stork-papas hold their meetings on summer afternoons. They stand one on each of the offsets of the gables. On the highest point is the president, who opens the meeting with a loud cackle. After this they all cackle in chorus, all these worthy storks, and those who only listen stand sometimes on one leg out of pure eagerness. But it happens sometimes that the whole assembly is dissolved in general altercation; they all flap their wings vigorously, and furiously cackle into each other's faces. It may also happen that some energetic stork-mamma or some saucy stork-baby will attempt to force themselves into the discussion, only to be thrust back so roughly that the feathers fly about. The old King's House! What sorrow there was the

day it was doomed to death by an irreverent body of town councillors who demanded a new up-to-date bank building. What low intrigues, what poisonous lies were invented to condemn it!

They insinuated that all the legends which had lent fame and splendour to the King's House through centuries were stolen finery. They also asserted that the house was so ruined by age that it could hardly stand, and therefore became a serious danger to the surrounding buildings. A furious dispute was carried on in the council chamber and in the local press between the spokesman of ideals—the teacher of history at the college—and the materialists standing up for the town's well-being. But these last conquered after bank-eager surveyors had pronounced against the security of the King's House. The demolition started. We children, whose patriotic imagination had grown under the shadow of the old house, followed with angry sorrow every beat of the demolisher's pickaxe, and enjoyed with wistful triumph the failure of the workmen to continue their labours by hand—the yard-thick walls of the old house having refused to budge without the added force of gunpowder. At last the old hero fell, but not by human hand. Dying, it mocked its assailants.

In the midst of the square lies the red town-hall with the town's coat-of-arms in gold and colours above the heavy, brown oak door. Round the town-hall gathers all the uncanny quality of the nursery

stories. There in front stood, in the old days, the pillory and the post where the offenders were tied to be publicly whipped. It was here amongst others that the famous brigands from the big woods north of the fjord expiated part of their punishment, when at last, after committing numberless crimes, they were caught by the soldiers and the peasants of the countryside. The band consisted of an old woman, her seven reprobate sons, and a beautiful young girl, who was the sweetheart of the eldest brother, Eric, ‘hook-finger.’ Robberies, abductions, and fires were the least of their crimes. They had various murders on their consciences, and tortures of the most gruesome kind. According to my nurse, they enjoyed themselves by tying little children to burning hot ovens, when they left a farm they had plundered, after having killed the grown-up inhabitants. It was a fête for the town and countryside when they were whipped, naked to the waist, in front of the town-hall, and the following morning taken to gallows-hill and beheaded. Only ‘Erik hook-finger’s’ sweetheart created a certain amount of pity; she was so very beautiful, and so young, and she wept bitterly when she was whipped. But mercy was out of the question, for she had been the most cruel of all in roasting the little children.

Round the square lie all the old merchant houses and inns, where the peasants put up on market days, and where there are the most wonderful places for children’s games. Old houses with

wooden beams, and a perfect network of little galleries, where herrings are hung to dry on stretched cords, with creaky staircases and tumbled-down outhouses, which lean up against each other like drunken men. Here in the lofts, in the great corn-heaps, we played hide-and-seek; and every Saturday found me behind the counter in the Dutch woman's basement beershop, where I passed foaming beer and dram to the peasants and to my friend the cab-driver. My friend lived in a hole behind the stables, where, in an ever fresh atmosphere of horse-manure, he lived the happiest bachelor existence one can imagine, assisted by a spirit-kettle, a chunk of brown bread, a pot of lard, and a bit of carraway cheese. When the atmosphere grew merry in the low basement it was a special delight to give the aged cab-horse bread dipped in gin, which made it tear round the square like a wild Arab, spreading terror and consternation amongst the peasant women sitting with their stiff, wide skirts about the steps of the town-hall.

I open my eyes once more and look out across the sun-bright square. The town-hall is still there, also the old houses. I see the basement beershop's tiny green windows. I catch a glimpse of the stream winding in and out amongst the tumble-down houses, and over whose dilapidated poetry a single lilac-tree in an adjoining garden spreads its young, blossoming smile. Yes, I know again my old town, and I get up in a light-hearted mood with a tingling feeling that I am at home.

I am at home, and I will go to my mother's grave.

The town is not yet awake. While I wander through its empty streets it seems to me as if I had come to surprise it, and I give resounding greetings to every well-known thing I meet. Fancy! there still hangs the heavy rope along the church-tower, which was the old town's simple fire-alarm. The person who discovered a fire pulled the rope to ring the church-bell. Amongst us children it was said that the fortunate person who in this way announced a fire was paid a shining silver-piece. How busily, but alas, how vainly, did I watch on my walks for signs of flames. I never gained the silver daler! I wonder if the old rope still does service, or merely hangs there as a forgotten remnant of forgotten days.

I stand still and look down the sloping side-street. It was there in the protruding corner-house that we lived during the years of the war. I was only a few years old at the time, yet the events of those days stamped their indelible impression on my mind. The German soldiers quartered on us, who quarrelled with mother about the Danish food, the jolly white-bearded Major Bow-wow, who fell in love with us children, but whom I would not kiss on any account because he was a German. But above all I remembered this scene: mother and my half-grown up sisters, with several little girls, are sitting ravelling lint, when suddenly from

the street sounds the tramping of horses. I hurry to the window, but at the same moment the door of father's study is flung open and I am pulled back by a strong hand. 'Pull down the blinds, no one must look out,' father says, pale and moved. 'The Germans are here.' An uncanny silence reigns in the room, and, frightened, I crouch against mother's skirts, while the clattering noise of many horses comes nearer. It stops just outside our windows. We only hear some quick, loud words which sound like scolding, then a whimper, new oaths, curses and rattling of arms, restless stamping of horses, and at last a terrified shriek in Danish. In spite of his own orders, father rushes to the window, mother and we children behind him, and from the chair I see a man, in whom I recognise our shoemaker, being dragged along the road behind a prancing horse, on which sits an officer in a shining, white cloak. The street is filled with grand, uniformed horsemen, who now all move on following the officer, who, with the shoemaker as forced guide, is leading the way down towards the fjord, across which the Danish soldiers have fled.

And then that other scene when the wounded Danish soldiers were driven through the streets after the disastrous fight in the hills west of the town. For once the Danes outnumbered the Germans and the victory seemed certain, but unfortunately the colonel who led our men was over-confident. At full-speed he allowed the soldiers to rush down the hill, at the foot of

which the Germans awaited them, sheltered by the banks. From their covered position the Germans were able to shoot down the forward rushing Danes like defenceless game. We children had heard about this, and also about the despair of the colonel who was quartered on a neighbouring family. Father had been told how confidently and proudly he had ridden off in the early morning to seek the Germans, only to return late the same night to lock himself in his rooms, silent, and refusing food. Now it is the next morning, and the long train of the wounded is beginning to arrive. Slowly and mournfully, like a funeral, the carts come through the streets, and on spread-out straw lie the wounded. Some have bandages round their heads, others on arms and legs. Often the bandages are stained with blood, and the faces are whiter than the bandages. Not one of the wounded look to the windows, all are staring straight in front with lifeless, hopeless eyes. At the time I could scarcely have thought of it, but later it seemed to me that these wounded Danish soldiers aroused less pity for their physical pain than for the despair and shame of the defeat, clearly to be read in their tortured faces.

I walk along without thinking of the road I am taking. It is twenty years since I walked through these streets, for twenty years I have not had their names in my thoughts, yet without reflection, without hesitation, as though by an invisible hand, I am led exactly whither I wish. I am in my child-

hood's home, I am in my father's house, my foot cannot go astray on this familiar ground.

As the cock for the third time crows his morning greeting over the town, I stand in the little street leading to the graveyard. The low, yellow thatched houses, where the wreath-makers live, still frame the street, and, as though it were yet twenty years ago, the simple wreaths of ivy, moss, and immortelles hang over the tiny doors with their old-fashioned latches. In one of the houses a window is opened, and, attracted by the noise of the early morning wanderer, a little, white-capped granny puts out her head. I buy wreaths and put the modest sum into her withered hand, and, followed by her blessing, I pass through the gate into the graveyard, where I am received by bird-twitterings, the perfume of cypresses, and morning fresh flowers.

My mother's grave lies far from the high road in a quiet corner, among hundreds of others. The invisible hand leads me along half-overgrown paths which wind in and out among the grassy mounds, and suddenly I stand in front of the small enclosure where mother rests with a child on either side, a large mound between two smaller. Fresh ivy covers all three and winds itself round the simple, marble cross, and over it a lilac-tree and a laburnum bend their heavy weight of blossoms. In each of the four corners are planted rose-trees, which are just unfolding their pink and white buds to the smile of the morning sun, refreshed by the rain-tears of the night.

I sit down on the green wooden bench, caressing with my eyes the name on the cross in front of me, while I talk to my mother. ‘I have come back to you, mother, to find peace. For twenty years I have been away from you, far, far away, amongst strangers. When last I sat here saying good-bye to you I did not realise what I had lost. I was a child and you a young wife. Now you are an old wise woman, and I am a life-weary man with hair already beginning to turn grey. Only give me the peace you won years ago and I will stay with you.’

I seem to see my mother sitting opposite me, an old woman with white hair and gentle, brown eyes. I forget the time while I look into her eyes, until I am awakened from my thoughts by the church-bell striking seven. I take the wreaths which are still hanging on my arm, and kneeling down, I place them on the grave. ‘Thank you, mother. Thank you for everything—in the old days and now.’

But my heart holds also another gratitude while I slowly, surrounded by the twittering of birds, the playing of wind in the trees, leave the peaceful, sweetly-scented garden of death. A gratitude for the old town’s faithfulness, that has not allowed my mother’s grave to lie forgotten, but has guarded and tended it. Is there ever such deep memory and constant faithfulness to be found in the big towns, where each day’s news chases noisily along the streets, pushing out everything of the past. There Death is only remembered in the clamouring cries of the newspaper announcements. There the

graveyards are so big and so far away. There the dead must take care of themselves. The old town has its dead in its very midst, always present, always living in loving memory. I thank you, my mother's friends in the old town. I don't know you any more, but I send you my heartfelt gratitude.

I finish my morning wandering on Rough-Hill, and there I stay. Rough-Hill lies just outside the old town, and is its pleasure-haunt and its pride. Seldom has a town found such a pleasant spot for a park. A century ago a generous citizen laid out the hill, dividing it into terraces, staircases, and winding alleys, protecting it with pines and fir-trees, in the shelter of which beeches and shrubberies grew up, making powerless the west wind, and letting the sun reign, creating out of the bleak hill a fertile garden. Here come on summer afternoons the old town's inhabitants with their picnic-baskets. From the pavilion on the lowest terrace they get their tea-urns and hot water, and make themselves happy in the little summer-houses. On the terraces above is the wood where the boys play their robber-games.

I approach Rough-Hill with a secret terror of being disappointed. In my childhood's memory it stands as something fairy-tale-like and wonderful. The hill is a mountain, the wood a primeval forest.

With a smile I see its greatness vanish. It seems to me that hill, as well as trees, have shrunk. There is nothing fairy-tale-like nor fantastic about Rough-

Hill, but its beauty is real enough. It is a perfect smiling idyl. After all Rough-Hill does not lack greatness, for it has got its wonderful view.

I reach the pavilion, a yellow, wooden building, outside which a waiter and an army of sparrows are busy clearing away from the little tables the remnants of the picnic baskets. I look round and am overwhelmed by the beauty of the view. At my foot I see the entire town, and behind it the fjord, which, like a river clear as a mirror, winds in and out amongst hills and meadows. My glance reaches for miles on both sides. An endless stretch of sky, water, and fertile Danish land and the town, of which the red roofs seem to have slipped down the green slopes of Rough-Hill.

Here I have my entire old town spread out in front of me, and at the same moment I feel that here I must stay. I therefore let the waiter call the landlord, and five minutes afterwards I am installed in the pavilion’s two attics. They are not generally let, for it is not a custom of the pavilion to take lodgers, but they are let to me when I also offer to rent them for the winter.

Now I have got my future home in order. Here is no luxury, but everything I need. A good bed in the sleeping-room, and in the sitting-room a large table, some chairs, and even a sofa.

I have unpacked my books and my pipe is filled. Since I was a young student I have not tasted a pipe.

God bless you cigars and cigarettes. But what

are you compared to some whiffs of the pure Dutch tobacco which I am smoking at this moment while I sit here in my attic, looking out over my old town.

12th OF JUNE.

IV **O**N the highest point of Rough-Hill, above the wood, on the open hillside, towers the mill, white with black wings on the green sward. It is the best mill for miles around, because there is always enough wind to work it. It serves also as landmark for the ships on the fjord, for it can be seen at several miles distance.

The miller owns the hill as far down as the park. The northern slope towards the fjord is wild and uncultivated, but on the southern slope a large piece of ground is railed in and cultivated as a garden. The miller has followed the example of the man who laid out the park. He has conquered wind and weather by planting a protecting hedge along the western side; he has mixed the sandy earth of the hill with laboriously-carried rich mould from the arable land below; he has watered and manured, digged and delved, until he saw his hanging garden thrive and blossom.

I remember the half-willing respect with which the miller was talked of by the townfolk. They admired his capabilities, but resented his strange aloofness. In his contract with the town-council from whom he bought the land, it was mentioned that at all times his land should be free for people to enjoy the view. But though he never attempted

to break this clause, the inhabitants of the town never felt themselves welcome on his property. At all events they kept at a respectful distance from his house and garden. Even we boys, who hated to forego a pirate’s raid on an orchard, allowed the miller’s famous apples and pears to ripen in peace. In the town there was also circulated several malicious rumours about the miller. It was said that he treated with tyrannical harshness his beautiful young wife, a farmer’s daughter from the south. Perhaps the rumours merely arose from the fact that the miller’s wife lived as isolated a life as her husband, a state of affairs the hospitable and sociable townspeople could not believe to be of her own free choice. At all events the rumours did not grow less unkind when the young wife died some few months after the birth of her first baby, leaving her husband a little daughter who had no nurse or maid to look after her, but was taken care of by the miller and his boy. The little girl, an object for the town’s pity, was about two or three years old when we went away. With shy curiosity I had often watched the little girl when, in the simple cart, a rough, wooden box on four wheels, she was pulled round the banks of the mill by the old, half-deformed miller’s boy.

Each day I have been for a walk round the mill. We have had storms from the west. I have enjoyed the grand view of the fjord in revolt, and I have, when the storm subsided, listened

to the far-away thundering of the sea, five miles away.

The mill I found in its usual place, but, to my great astonishment, its wings stood still. I thought : 'The miller must have changed very much in his old age. I suppose he no longer likes the mill to work during the storm. . . .' But to-day, too, when the weather is more calm, and only a gentle wind blows from the wood, the mill rests in silent unconcern. The wind pulled at the reefed-in sails, and the sunshine gaily played through the ribs of the wings. But the mill never moved. But the most wonderful of all was, that, calmly leaning against the wings, as if danger was out of the question, stood a young woman in a tight-fitting, blue linen gown, looking out over the country, with her arms folded over her high bosom. She neither heard me nor saw me. She seemed like a fairy princess dreaming at the foot of the sleeping mill.

I wonder if the miller is dead, and if no one has inherited the mill and the work.

When, a little while after, I returned home, I asked the landlord if the old miller still lived up there, but he answered 'Yes.'

19th OF JUNE.

EVERY day I go for walks in the town, scouring it in every direction ; for every step an old memory. I feel like an explorer in my own soul. Within me, stone by stone, is once more being built a kingdom of good memories, a kingdom I, for

years, have allowed to fall into ruins. The old town, with a childish Sunday feeling, becomes alive within me, peopled with a crowd of dear figures, some of which I still meet walking in the streets. Old teachers, who seemed already old when I was amongst their pupils, walk along in the same slow, or busily-tripping, way to the school. Worthy citizens, whose hospitable, smiling faces I still remember, from the days of their children’s parties. Young men, in whose solemn ‘breadwinner faces’ I suddenly seem to catch a glimpse of a forgotten play-fellow’s chubby features. I walk like Haroun al Raschid in the streets of Bagdad. Noticing, recognising, without being myself either noticed or recognised. Only now and again I seem to meet a slanting, curious glance, which says: ‘Hulloa! we have got a stranger in the town!’

There are other figures which come to life in my memory as I study the signs in the shops. It seems to me, when I find the same shops with the same grocer, baker, and workmen names in the places where I last saw them, as if the old town had stopped its life and its development when we left. I have to reason with myself and say, ‘But after all, it is only twenty years ago! for I feel like a very, very old man, who after having spent ages in the Troll’s hill, returns to his home. I am quite unable to understand why everything is not changed, and why everybody I knew is not dead.

Of course many of them are. In some cases I know it from hearsay, in others I guess it through

not seeing them in their accustomed corners. These figures also become alive in my thoughts, in the streets where they once walked and which I now walk without meeting them.

But most clearly of all, I see the old maid, who taught the infant boys of the better-class families in the old town. The dear fat old thing, with whom the mothers could so confidently leave their babes, for she did not treat them so much in the usual school-mistress way, but more like a nurse or a favourite aunt. It was she, who with her chubby fingers, assisted us in pulling out our baby teeth, when they began to fall. It was to her we were sent on the days when the storks brought their wonderful presents, or when other disturbing family affairs occurred which made it necessary for us to be got rid of. She gave us our first theatre tickets, and when we paid our four marks on the first of each month, she would return the two to those whose parents were not very well off, so that they could buy themselves something useful. It was she also who, on Shrove Tuesday, stayed late in bed, that we boys could have the pleasure of whipping her up in true Shrove-tide fashion, and be rewarded with one of the buns, of which she kept for that night an enormous basketful under her bed.

You dear good old woman, in your warm heart beat all the old town's innocent simplicity. I build this little monument in your honour, a monument we boys too long have owed you.

20th OF JUNE.

THE young woman I saw up at the mill the VI
other day is the miller’s daughter. How
foolish of me not to realise that at once. Of course
she is long ago grown up.

I cannot get her out of my thoughts. She stood
there so proud, so free, looking so far out over
town and wood, yes, even over Rough-Hill itself.
What were the dreams which filled her bosom?
What were the longings her crossed arms crushed
back? Did she, from her exalted place, look down
with contempt on mankind’s earthborn desire, or
was it her wish to be one of the stirring crowd?

I prefer to think of her as the goddess of pro-
found peace, the goddess I worship. Here on
Rough-Hill stands her temple, and of the mill I
make her high-altar. She calls up here, to blessed
peace in nature’s unsullied kingdom, he, who weary
seeks a haven away from life’s daily dust and drab.
Her bosom has the meadow’s scented clover-rest
for the tired wanderer’s head, her eyes mirror the
heaven’s blue, and her voice echoes the winds
whispering lullaby in the crowns of the trees.

Am I a fool, you beautiful miller’s daughter, to
fasten my poem’s halo round your head, to choose
you as the goddess of my dreams? Or are you
merely a little provincial girl who is longing for
sweetheart, banns and bridal-bed? Perhaps you
have already found your miller-swain? Perhaps it
was for him you were looking, when you stood on
the high-altar?

What matter? Stand where my dream placed you. I do not know you, neither do I want to know you. Let no brutal reality sully your holy image.

25th OF JUNE.

VII **T**O-DAY my letters were forwarded by my publisher. Amongst many which were unimportant one from my mistress.

She asks, astonished and sad, if earth has swallowed me. In vain she has awaited me and sought me. From a mutual acquaintance she has heard rumours that I have gone abroad with a lady. She now sends her letter out into the blue to my old address, and she writes: 'I don't know if this will reach you. Yet in one way or the other I must know if rumour speaks the truth. I am almost forced to believe it. But have I deserved that you should treat me like this? What have I done wrong? Have I not always given in to you in everything, done my utmost to behave just as you wished me to, never worried you with importunity and jealousy. Now that you have caused me so bitter a sorrow, I wish I could hate you. But I cannot. Write only two words to say that you will return and I will love you as always.'

She cannot hate me and she imagines she loves me. I don't think that love and hatred necessarily are each other's complement. I feel on the contrary that the greatest love, how ever sorely it is tortured, never turns into hatred. But *she* who

sends me this turtle-dove letter is only a dove in so far as she can croon in love-sick fashion, she will never become a hawk, she lacks that fanaticism of emotion, which sharpens claws and beak. She only took me for her lover, because it flattered her vanity to be chosen by me. She feels a certain emptiness in her life now I am gone. She wishes to have me back, because it angers her that I have left her of my own free will. But within a very short time the happiness she desires will blossom again, the empty place will be taken by a new lover, who, though he may be different, will have just as many advantages. Her bitterness towards me will vanish, and when in after years we meet again, we will greet each other pleasantly like two friends who have never gone through life’s seriousness together, who have scarcely had moments together worthy remembrance or forgetfulness.

That is the naked truth, and that explains why I was able to leave her without finding it necessary to say good-bye. Here was no question of a quarrel. What could I have said to her but a lukewarm ‘ thanks for a good time.’ Here was no gordian knot to cut asunder, only a loosely-twisted cotillon-bow to untie, the red ribbon from the white. I could not persuade myself to say the stereotyped words of comfort and thanks at this mock-funeral. I was ashamed to play a part in a scene of such evident make-believe, to give the cue to her who, without doubt, would have played a great drama in the most approved style.

When I decided to break up my life in town I think, unconsciously, that my strongest motive was not only to get away from my last mistress, but still more from the love-game which is played in the surface society of the big town, and in which I so eagerly took part. I had mostly taken part in it to satisfy my desire to shame love, to tear it down from the giddy pinnacle on which my youth's blind faith had placed it, with the result that I myself one day was lying maimed on the ground.

I had loved and had been deceived. I forced my sorrow back into my own heart and swore a silent oath, that for the first and last time I had been love's fool. As I had been conquered, I would conquer now. As I had been played with, so I would play with others. I had no desire to hurt, as I had been hurt. I merely meant to take love with a high hand, as love once had taken me. And I wished to teach others to do the same, teach them that love is only worthy to be taken as a joke. Certainly not in the least a thing to stake one's life on. But I learned that in love one always stakes one's life, even if it is not one's intention to do so. I felt my life was being ruined, while I believed I was preparing to be love's master. I awoke one morning in terror thinking of the years that are passing. What has become of all the loves I played with? What have I garnered of the feelings I carelessly sowed hither and thither? Drop by drop I let my heart's blood ooze away. I gave little and received nothing,

gave so often, that very soon there will be no more to give.

I will answer my angry mistress thus: ‘I wish for you, who were so apt a pupil, that once in your life you may meet a man who will teach you to love.’

Perhaps I will in that way, at all events, teach her to hate.

For she is not stupid.

LAST DAYS OF JUNE.

I WILL write a book about the old town. Not VIII as it is, for I don’t care about the critical psychological method of modern literature, which is, of course, at my disposal, nor do I wish to write about the town as it was, but I should like to rebuild it as I see it through the blue haze of childhood’s memory, in a sun-mist of peaceful joy and sadness without bitterness. It shall be a book for all those, who, like myself, are longing for a cosy and quiet corner from which the world is barred out, and where the soul, for a short while, can live its flower life in a convent-garden. It will be a book without novelty, without glaring colouring; there will be no excitement and scarcely any action in it. My wish will be fulfilled, if those who read it have the feeling that I have brought them a bunch of single-coloured, single-scented wild flowers into their room.

Three times a week the town library is opened. I spend these in the reading-room looking through yellow folios, where in twisted, pedantic writing

the old town's life and events are recorded. I will scarcely find any use for these studies, but through loosing myself in these far-away events I seem to absorb the atmosphere of gentle aloofness, with which I am anxious to fill my book.

It is not only for the old folios' sake I go to the library. The place itself fascinates me. It often happens that I quite forget the book lying open in front of me, to lean back in the broad armchair covered with worn pigskin, and lose myself in dreams. The library is arranged in an old monastery, where, during the Catholic times, the monks lived, and where during the first centuries after the Reformation the Latin school was held. The room in which I sit was the refectory, a fairly large room with white plaster walls, and a three-arched ceiling. On the one long side is the doorway, so low that a man must stoop to enter. It opens into the library rooms, their shelves filled with faded blue and yellow bindings. On the other long side are the three windows, one in each arch, windows buried in carving and with tiny, mullioned panes through which the sun shines green and smoke-coloured. The windows reach almost to the ground, and look out on the garden; a corner of the old monastery's orchard and graveyard. It is fertile ground with abundant shrubberies and glowing splendour of flowers with their rich, shining leaves. Amongst a cluster of heavily laden fruit-trees stands a tall, flat, weather-beaten gravestone with half-obliterated inscription. My eyes rest on the tall,

yellow wall, which surrounds the garden along the narrow lane. In one place the wall is double, forming a narrow enclosure. On the inner side there are traces of roughly hewn steps, and in the enclosure an old tree is pining away, with leaves on only a few of its branches.

I look at the steps in the wall, at the tree in the enclosure, and I dream of the young monk, who must have sat where I am sitting now, listening to the old monks gossip after supper. But his thoughts are elsewhere; he watches the sunset’s golden play in the foliage outside the low window and his heart beats wildly. Then the brothers retire to rest and night falls on the monastery-garden. But the young monk carefully opens the door to the refectory, creeps to one of the windows, loosens its fastenings, and swings himself into the garden, feels his way through the dark night to the wall, stands on the topmost step, bends down one of the branches of the tree, lets it swing back, and he is in the enclosure, where his beloved, disguised in man’s clothes, awaits him and stays with him, while the nightingale sings in the garden.

I will write a book about the old town and its cloister-peace. I should also like to let the nightingales sing above the young monk and his secret happiness.

1st OF JULY.

I HAVE had a little adventure. IX
This morning I sat as usual outside the pavilion and fed my sparrows. There were many sparrows

on Rough-Hill when I came, but they grow more numerous every day, and more and more fearless. They now even hop straight into my room to see what I have got for them, and if it happens that some morning I let them wait for their food they announce their arrival by tapping on my windows and impatiently twittering on the window-sill.

We had reached the last number of the performance, consisting in my placing a large piece of bread in the middle of the table, over which the whole herd scrambles. They peck and tear and scuffle until a special plucky couple, by joining forces, drag off, after various unsuccessful attempts, the last big bite.

At this moment I catch sight of a young girl in a light frock, who stands on the steps of the upper terrace, and who has evidently watched my game with the sparrows. When my glance meets hers, she blushes, and seems slightly embarrassed at having been caught watching me. She makes a movement as if to turn and fly, then she thinks better of it and walks calmly down the steps and straight up to me.

I leave my seat and bow to her, and she gives me a slight nod, and with a self-possession which may be forced, but seems natural, she says: 'I have got something for you,' while she takes a folded piece of paper out of her pocket. I open the paper and look at her in astonishment.

'It is yours, isn't it?' she asks. 'I recognised you when I saw you a moment ago.'

The paper she gives me is a leaf of my pocket-book which was blown away when I was on the steamer, and on which I had written some very intimate words. ‘Yes, it is mine,’ I said. ‘But how did you know me, and how could you guess that this paper belongs to me?’

She smiles gaily, saying, ‘Don’t you know me at all—but of course it is stupid of me to ask; perhaps you never even saw me?’

Suddenly I understand, and I exclaim triumphantly: ‘It was you then who, on board, when the sun rose, suddenly stood at my side?’

‘Yes, only I did not *suddenly* stand there, for I am neither a witch nor an elfin-maid, though I live on a hill.’

How foolish that I did not realise it at once. Of course she was the miller’s daughter: my maid from the high-altar.

She stretched out her hand and said, while she looked at me seriously: ‘Good-bye, and please forgive me for disturbing you. But I thought you would like to have this paper again, and when I found it on the steamer near the gangway you had already gone.’

I stood and watched her, while she, in her quiet, dignified way, walked up the steps and then quickly ran away, disappearing like a white vision amongst the dark fir-trees.

It was on the tip of my tongue to call her back, and I very nearly started after her. It seemed to me there was so much more I wanted to ask her

and to talk to her about. Yet in the same moment I thought: 'No, after all it is more beautiful as it is. The words we exchanged alter nothing. My goddess has descended from her hill, has appeared to me in a vision for a brief moment, and has again vanished.'

But I stood a long time and watched with dreaming eyes the place where she disappeared.

4th OF JULY.

X **I**S she beautiful? What is she really like? I will try to make clear to myself the impression she has made on me.

The air becomes rare and pure where she moves. She seems almost new-born in her maturity. She radiates youth, health and unconscious goodness. Her eyes are deep and tender, yet clear and confident as a child's. Whether they smile or darken with seriousness they tell thoughts right out; there is no concealment in the corners. Her bosom is high and round, her waist slender, her hips luxurious. But she carries her youthful bravery as unconcernedly as a tree its summer splendour. If she had to pass through a camp of drunken soldiers they would instinctively make way for her. She seems so unapproachable yet so magnetic. From her hair, which, parted in the middle, falls in two brown waves over her white forehead, to her feet, which, in rhythmical lightness, carry her over the earth, she forms in her own personality the ideal of straightforward security. She knows her way

and her goal as day knows light. With her one can feel perfect trust. She knows neither deceit nor bye-path; she brings with her the air which is high above town and wood. She attracts like an altar: one must approach her kneeling. She is Woman as she stepped forth from nature's hand, at the same time virgin and mother.

This is the impression I unconsciously got of her when, at sunrise, she stood on the steamer, and when later I saw her standing near the mill leaning on its resting wings. And it was in this light she appeared to me the other day.

On the paper she gave back to me I had written: 'My soul cries in longing for a mother.' Most likely she has read it, but this does not make me ashamed. She is welcome to know my heart's secret. She will neither sneer nor betray me.

Perhaps she will not appear to me again. At all events it is not likely I shall have an opportunity of speaking to her. But it seems to me I have near me an understanding friend and confederate whose silent sympathy surrounds me, one to whom I would not hesitate to go if I was in trouble. When I walk through the wood I seem to see her face smiling on me amongst the trees, and I feel glad and reassured as if I held her strong, warm hand in mine. When now and again I am attacked by disturbing thoughts and feverish desires I summon her image to defend me, and her cooling touch sets my mind at rest.

She is always with me as my patron saint.

6th OF JULY.

XI I HAVE a friend in the institution. The institution is a home for aged spinsters and widows. My friend, a spinster of seventy summers, is one of the youngest inhabitants of the institution, and the other members look upon her as a perfect child. Yet, she is the veteran member of the institution, for she has been there since she was really a child. She was smuggled in with her mother, against all laws and rules, because, according to the doctors, she was so weak and ill, she could not possibly live. She lay in bed for many years, and when she began to recover the mother was dead. Having no other relatives but the institution, the child, now a woman of between thirty and forty, was allowed to stay.

In her cell, which she shared with three other ladies—they always spoke of each other as ladies—I spent some of the happiest days of my childhood. She had numerous talents. No one told such wonderful fairy-tales, of which she had an inexhaustible store, for she made them up herself, and no one knew so many card tricks. Besides that, she was a perfect artist with her fingers: she could cut out all sorts of paper figures, knew how to make the most fascinating things for the Christmas-trees, and platted marvellous little baskets and boxes out of straw. She became a great adept at the last accomplishment during the many years she lay in bed. Her mattress furnished the straw, her fancy and skill did the rest.

To visit her meant to a child to go to fairyland. There were always curious things to see and hear, and besides one was given the most lovely coffee, coffee with sugar-candy, which was not put in the cup, but was crunched and sucked while one enjoyed the nectar.

I paid her a visit to-day. In the long sand-strewn corridor stood now, as then, old women who courtesied and put their heads together curiously, and I recognised again the well-known atmosphere of lavender, stuffiness, and prudish cleanliness. I knocked on the door of the room where my friend had lived for half a century, while member after member was laid in her coffin and carried away. In the long, narrow room, with a window looking over the vegetable garden of the institution, sat four old women. Each on her own territory, a quarter of the room which was just large enough to hold a bed on the one wall, a chest of drawers and wash-stand on the other, and in between two chairs. My entrance caused bewildered curiosity amongst the room's inhabitants. The knitting fell from their hands, and they looked up inquiringly to find out which of them the strange gentleman had come to visit. I discovered my friend at once enthroned on the prima-donna's place near the window, withered and grey, and even thinner than before, but she had still her bright, clever eyes. She grew quite pink from emotion, and opened her arms to press me to her meagre bosom. 'Yes, fancy, it is really he, and he comes here to see me.'

I never dreamt of being such a success. I was fêted as a prince. My friend was quite beside herself with excitement. Not only was I introduced to the 'ladies' in her room, but she fetched round from the other rooms and corridors all the old women who had known my parents, and seen me as a baby. They streamed in, rocking old grannies, and erect-looking spinsters, who shook me by the hand, pushed each other away, and talked against one another to be the first to tell me how clearly they remembered me, how well they had known my parents, and to inquire after every one in the family.

There was coffee to overflowing, but there was a little difficulty about the sugar-candy: the old ladies could not understand that I did not prefer lump-sugar.

When at last I went away I was seen to the door by half the institution. But I left my friend with the understanding that next time I came we should try to have a little more privacy.

9th OF JULY.

XII I FOUND the other day in the library some family records which I wanted to verify. I called therefore to-day on the vicar to ask permission to look in the old registers.

He was a tall young man, with sharp features and clear, shining eyes. In the most polite way he helped me, and seemed altogether to be, from his manners, an agreeable man of the world. But we had not talked many minutes before he proved

himself to be an eager apostle of the most severe form of Christianity. He took the floor. I sat listening half absent-mindedly. But I understood enough to realise that he was very occupied in clearing up all the old jog-trot routine in which his predecessor had left the town's church affairs. He pictured the old town as a perfect Sodom of ungodliness and indecency. Any number of crimes were committed, such as drunkenness, adultery, gambling and balls at the town-hall. Those who praised the old town did not know it, and were merely taken in by its superficial goodness and amiability. But with God's help the pipe should soon play another tune. Though he had hardly commenced, yet he was already able to notice some effect of his strenuous work.

It was so long ago since I had heard the words of fanaticism. They rattled like stage thunder round my head. How ugly he looked in his furious denunciation, and how absurd it seemed that this angry young man should attempt to teach godliness to these kind-hearted citizens. Once or twice I tried to contradict him, but gave it up. I felt myself so outside the strife, and never before have I felt so happy to be outside it. To think that here was a man, who imagined himself working for a merciful God, foaming at the mouth with anger, instead of remembering that the world needed peace and gentleness. In truth the wolves devour the lambs.

When I stood up to go the vicar became again

suddenly the courteous man of the world. He shook my hand cordially, smiled amiable, and joked about his own vehemence.

But as I walked home I pitied my old town. It has had its good time with the old vicars; they understood it; they modified their gospel to its needs. They did not object themselves to take a hand at whist; they did not snap their fingers at a glass of good wine. They rejoiced to see the young people step gaily in the dance, and they did not condemn when a not quite unsullied bride wore the myrtle-wreath before the altar.

It seems to me the air has become oppressive; there is no more joy in the sunshine, and the wind makes me shiver. You dear old gay and healthy town now strikes the hour of your evil visitation!

Not until I reached sunny Rough-Hill could I shake off my depression. There a pleasure awaited me which filled me with foolish fancies, and made my heart beat a regular storm march.

On my table stood a bouquet of roses. A boy had brought it with no other message than that they were to be placed on the strange gentleman's writing-table.

From whom could they come but from her? Then she had not forgotten me; she is still thinking of me, and has even sent me a greeting. For a moment my joy is darkened by the thought that the flowers might have come from my old friend in the institution. No, that is impossible; such beautiful flowers do not grow in the old town.

They can only be gathered on Rough-Hill in the miller's garden.

- 20th OF JULY.

THE nightingales are singing in the bushes. XIII
I have wandered through the woods with my miller's daughter, whose name is Greta. How small a thing it is, how little remarkable, and yet it seems to me that nothing more important has ever happened to me.

I walk in the wood and I meet her. We are neighbours, so there is nothing curious in that. We know one another, and it is therefore the most natural thing in the world that I should stop and talk to her. It was, however, she who stopped me. In this case also there is nothing extraordinary.

She asked me: How was I getting on? If I saw many people? If I were missing the big town?

I answered: I grow happier every day. I see nobody. I miss nothing, and the day before yesterday I had a beautiful bunch of roses. She tells me the roses were from her, and I am delighted that she does not make a secret of it. She tells me that she suddenly had an idea to send me some of her flowers. 'I thought it might please you, because they are so rare and beautiful, and I should like to please you.'

I asked her why she felt so kindly towards me, an utter stranger, and she answered, 'Because I understood that you were not very happy, and I—have always been so contented.'

I ask her to tell me something about her life with her father in the lonely mill. But she shakes her head and says: 'There is not much to tell. I take care of my flowers, my bees, and my fruit, and I read to my father. But if you would care to know more about us, then perhaps you will come up and see for yourself. We—like yourself—see nobody, so we ought to suit each other.' A moment after she added: 'You need not say yes or no at once. If you are happy all alone, there is no reason to seek company. But should you some day need us, then remember that you are welcome.'

We stood looking at each other to say good-bye, when I suddenly realised there was something I wanted explained, and I asked: 'The other day I saw you standing near the mill; you were leaning against one of its wings. Suppose it had suddenly started to move?'

'Oh, no,' she answered. 'There is no danger of that. The mill has not moved for years. Father is old and nearly blind. He has quite given up working the mill any longer.'

She nodded good-bye and went. But I stood gazing after her, whispering blessings on her, all the tender music of happiness and gratitude which filled my heart.

Do I love her? I don't think so, for I don't desire her. There is nothing between us which I wish different. My senses lie at rest like happily-smiling babes listening to her voice's caress. The warm tenderness of her eyes enfolds me, and her

handclasp is the evening prayer’s angel-guard. If the impossible could be imagined, and she to-night came to my door and asked me to let her in, I should flee as from a desecration and should feel myself accursed. I should feel like one standing at the source of purity who sees it defiled by mirroring his picture.

When once more I sit in my room with her roses in front of me, I suddenly long to show her how much her friendship means to me. I fasten one of the roses on a sheet of paper and write underneath, ‘From one, whom it has made sane.’ I hurry up through the wood to the miller’s house and place it over the door. I know it will fall into the right hands, for the father is blind. Again I wander homewards while the nightingales are singing in my heart.

29th OF JULY.

I SAT this morning down at the harbour, waiting XIV for the arrival of the steamer from the capital. To escape possible acquaintances amongst the passengers, I sat a little apart near the storing-house for lately arrived goods. I amused myself by looking down on the shining-green posts in the water, where crabs crawled amongst firmly-fixed mussels. I thought of old days, of what an excitement it was when the steamer, then the only means of communication, brought visitors from the capital. The excitement started at early dawn. Then, as now, the hour for arrival was very uncertain. Under normal conditions the steamer sailed

into the harbour at five o'clock, and one always had to be prepared at that hour. It sometimes happened that one of the fogs, a speciality of the fjord, would draw its impenetrable veil from shore to shore, which meant that the waiting lasted for hours. We children would often run forwards and backwards five or six times to report to our parents the state of affairs. At last the signal goes up on Fjord Hill, the fog lifts, and the steamer, so anxiously looked for, arrives, bringing aunts, friends, and presents, good things to eat, and an endless vista of pleasures.

It happens to-day, while I am sitting like this recalling old memories, that the fog suddenly falls across the fjord, just as the steamer turns the last point. A grey wall slides down in front of me, and I have to pull myself together, before I quite understand what has happened. Far out from the fjord I hear the steamer's fog-signal, which sounds warning and plaintive. But it is evident that the captain, being so near the harbour, is determined to steer his way in. Gradually the fog-signal sounds nearer and nearer, and one can see the top of the masts above the mist. When, just as suddenly as it came, the fog disappears. Is it an illusion? There, on the upper deck of the steamer, which is now only some few hundred yards from land, stands a tall young woman in a long, dark cloak. Do my eyes deceive me? Is it really she? Without caring for either Peter or Paul, I rush down to the landing-stage. The young woman has now seen me, and

waves to me with her handkerchief. Yes, it is really she!

Heaven be praised for the smile with which she greets me. So she is really delighted to see me—delighted at this unexpected meeting.

We walk up through the town together. I am so overwhelmed with happiness that I cannot speak. I walk through *my* town at *her* side, and I hear her tell me the reason for her journey. She comes from the same place as that morning I saw her on the steamer, a small market-town at the mouth of the fjord. She goes there every fortnight to sell the produce of the garden, such as fruit, vegetables, jam, and honey. Her father has a business friend there, with whom he prefers to deal, rather than with the merchants of the old town.

When she has told me all this, and I am still silent, she says: ‘But what were you doing down at the harbour? Did you expect some one?’

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I think so. Ever since my childhood the steamer has always brought me somebody I was fond of. And even to-day it did not fail me.’ Seeing that my words do not embarrass her, I continue: ‘And you? Tell me, did you expect, when you looked towards the land, that some one was waiting for you?’

She answers: ‘I stood in the fog thinking of you, thinking of the morning I first saw you, and suddenly I saw you there—on the other side of the fog.’

Involuntarily I take her hand, and when she does

not withdraw it, I say : ' Yes, now I am on the other side of the fog.'

A little while after, when we parted, she says : ' When are you coming up to the mill? We are expecting you.'

THE NIGHT BETWEEN THE
1st AND 2nd OF AUGUST.

XV I WAITED two days before I followed up the invitation. I thought to myself: I don't suppose she meant me to go at once. But to-night I felt I must go. When I arrived, Greta stood in the door. ' Well, at last,' she said; ' father has already been teasing me and saying that you did not care for our company.' That made me feel at ease and I knew that I was welcome.

The miller's sitting-room, with windows looking out over the fjord, was like a cabin. It was a deep room with low ceiling, furnished with long yellow-polished horsehair sofa, a large folding-table, leather-covered chairs, two maps, and pictures of ships on the wall. In one corner stood an old-fashioned piano, in another the model of a ship, and round the wall, on shelves and cupboards, stuffed, tropical fish and shells, and over the table hung a swinging lamp.

Greta led me into this room to her father, whose broad, gigantic frame I at once recognised, but whose eyes under the bushy, grey brow looked pale and extinguished. He sat in the sofa corner, dressed in a blue pea-jacket, and puffed away at a heavy meerschaum pipe. Greta led me up to him,

saying, ‘Here’s the strange gentleman; you see, father, he has come after all.’ His heavy brown hand pressed mine cordially, and immediately I felt at home in the miller’s house.

Never have I felt so at home anywhere. I sat thinking: ‘Have I seen all this before in a dream, or is it a dream which my soul’s longing has conjured up?’ It seemed to me I had lived for many years amongst these curious surroundings, in this cabin which looks like a wreck thrown up on the land of this hospitable hill. I seem to have known so long this old blind man with his wise talk, and this young girl who calmly adorns and makes cosy our hermit existence.

I listened to the old man’s tales, while filling my joyous soul with Greta’s image. Dressed in a simple grey indoor gown and a coloured peasant apron, she went in and out, bringing us sandwiches and fruit-wine of her own making, afterwards filling our pipes and mixing our toddy from old West-Indian rum. Every time she returned, sunshine seemed to stream into the room. That the old man also felt this I could see from the glint of light which her entrance brought to his eyes.

While Greta was getting these things ready, the miller said: ‘Before I settled down here, I travelled far and wide. I steered ships across the seas both for my own and others’ benefit. But the day came when I thought I had had enough. I had seen more than I cared to see, times became bad for sailing ships, and I did not think I would make

much more out of my journeys. Then it came about that I built the mill here. For after all a mill is also a ship, it needs both sail and wind to bring meal to the sack, and besides it brings it so much more surely. The other millers in the neighbourhood crossed themselves for fear of the new miller, who steered his mill like a ship, even in the strongest wind. Gradually the mill had brought enough for my daughter's and my needs. I was old, and my sight was ruined by the strong wind and the flying corn-dust, and then one gets so tired of a mill because of its eternal noise and its continual turning round in the same place. I was tired, and longed to let the mill rest, and get peace round me, which after all is a very natural thing. You are only a young man, but from what Greta tells me, you must already have felt something of the same.

But it is more unnatural in Greta. She seems like a child of the calm up here, and young as she is, she seems to want nothing else. For if you think it is I who keep her here shut up like a bird in a cage, you are very much mistaken. I have often proposed to her that she should see something of the world. I have even suggested that we should move to the capital for a year or two, but she will not leave this place. Here, she says she has got everything that makes her happy, for everything out in the world she seems only to have a curious fear and distaste. As one might imagine, this has not come as she grew older and through

reading the unsatisfying modern literature; no, she seems to have been born with this feeling. When she was a little girl, I thought it would give her pleasure to send her to her mother’s relatives in the capital. She behaved nicely enough, and stayed the visit out, but on her return she made me promise her that I would never send her away again. Everybody has been kind to her, and done all in their power to amuse her, but all the time she had longed for Rough-Hill till she had grown pale from longing and loneliness.’

The old man stopped talking, and sat for a while in deep thought. Then he added, ‘Well, I suppose the time will come when she will have to leave—when I am dead. Unless she married a man who would live with her here. But of course I cannot say that Rough-Hill is rich in young men, and as far as I know, Greta has never worried her head much about such things. She is different also in this from other young girls, though she has read enough about love and romance.’

I sat very late in the miller’s room. When it grew dark, Greta lit the lamp and sat down at the piano. Through the open window one saw the outline of the resting mill against the background of the pale summer sky. Out into the stillness were carried the thin, tingling notes of the piano with Greta’s simple and touching song. Whilst in the sofa-corner the old miller drowsed, the soft lamplight falling on his gently smiling face.

15th OF AUGUST.

XVI I WONDER how the world is getting on? If a great war or a great revolution had broken out, I suppose the rumours would have been so noisy, they would even have reached me here. But since no rumours have disturbed my newspaperless existence, I may conclude that the events have not been of very great importance. On the home 'exchange' the quotations will most probably be restricted to the usual number of engagements and scandals, the usual political soup on a sausage-stick on which there is scarcely left even the least flavour of meat, a little theatrical squabble on account of the approaching season, and the announcement of half a hundred books, of which the three-fourths will be forgotten the same day they are published, because they tell of nothing there is in the author's or his readers' minds, or because the author has nothing in his mind of interest to anybody, except to himself and a few of his nearest relatives.

It is reflections such as these which retard the progress of my new book. One day the subject will seem too small and unimportant, and I fear that people will scorn my book and turn from it saying: What possible interest can this have for me? But the next day I wake up full of gratitude and happiness for all the beauty of its old memories, and for all the new impressions round me, and again the feeling is born in me that my book should bring a message to other hearts, which have felt and dreamt the same dreams as my own.

In this way my work grows slowly and jerkily through varying moods. Do I tarry because new events are weaving a romance into the old memories, a romance which is still in the making, and of which I at all events do not know the end? Or do I hesitate out of a certain cowardly fear for the friends, male and female, I have left behind? Is it the ironical smiles, with which I believe they will read my book about my pilgrimage to childhood's holy land, which sometimes stops my pen? Am I really, here in my secure loneliness away from all rumours and remarks, still under the slavish fear of society?

I confided my fears to-night to Greta, as we went for our evening stroll on the hill. When I had finished my confession, she said simply with bent head, as though apologising for expressing an opinion, 'From what I know of literature, and I have not read so little, and as far as I am able to judge, it is the fear of speaking out, of losing themselves in their subjects, which is the fault of most authors. Whenever I read a book, I have the feeling that even the author, who pretends to be very frank, has always got an eye on the reader's jury, is always thinking of his own dignity, always trimming and adorning his tale, so that no one shall have cause for indignation or scorn. If you care for my advice, which it is perhaps presumptuous of me to give, then write as if you had no other public but me, an ignorant girl, not wise enough for either indignation or scorn.'

We had stopped in our walk, and stood looking out over the fjord and town below, when she said, 'Or best of all, write as the man who lives on Rough-Hill.'

23rd OF AUGUST.

XVII I HAVE discovered that Greta does not really know the old town, and I have asked her if she would let me be her guide. I want her to learn to love it as I do. Knowing that it would give me pleasure, she accepted my offer. She seems very interested in what I show her and tell her, but most of all it amuses her to see my eagerness in fulfilling my duty as the showman of the old town.

To-day we went to the castle.

The castle is situated close to the fjord, and now does duty as the residence of the governor of the province. It is a long, grey, two-storied building with a number of tiny, mullioned windows. Only the row of old poplars, standing on guard in front, and the red-cloaked soldier marching up and down show the house to be a more distinguished one, otherwise it does not appear to be either very old or very remarkable. It has only a few ruins left from the time it was a real castle and the seat of the king's vassal.

It draws towards evening as Greta and I walk through the deep, gloomy gateway in the front building into the large, square courtyard, which is surrounded by low, white wings. The grass grows thickly amongst the stones of the courtyard, and

against the white buildings, stand, after the style of old manor-houses, short, dome-shaped lime-trees. At the foot of the trees round the yard runs a gutter, deep and broad as a small rivulet, with numerous boards for crossing.

We sit down on a bench under the lime-trees close to the gateway, where the water from the gutter gathers and disappears into a subterranean passage down to the fjord.

While the sun sinks behind the hills north-west of the town, sending its last rays slantwise through the gateway over the grass in the yard, I tell Greta about the cruel knight, Count Esben, who centuries ago reigned over the castle, and who was as famous as a seducer of women as he was as a warrior. For safety’s sake in the time of war, his predecessors had built a secret passage from the basement of the castle to the fortifications on the other side of the fjord. Count Esben used this passage mostly for his gallant adventures. In manners he was amiable and condescending, and it often happened that he asked a citizen and his young wife or sweetheart to feast in the castle. But when the citizen was made dead drunk, he would lure the young woman out of the hall. If she tried to resist she was gagged and carried along the passage under the fjord to a tiny house with voluptuous rooms, where the feast was continued very often to the woman’s delight, for Count Esben was a handsome and generous lord, but certainly to the despair of the husband or lover, who, when he woke from his

drunken sleep, found the bird flown. But if he saw it would be to his advantage he often held his tongue, and kept his shame to himself. For Count Esben was well known as a jealous master with a hard hand; besides, there seemed little reason to spread all over the town the indignity one's sweetheart had suffered, especially as one could never be sure how willing or unwilling she had been. But sooner or later rumours grew out of veiled hints, suddenly broken betrothals and quarrels between married couples who before had been perfectly happy. A cloud of secret fear and whispering hatred descended over castle and town.

Then it happened that Count Esben set his eyes on the lovely seventeen years'-old daughter of the mayor, who was married to the cleverest craftsman in the town, Clas Bryde. For a while Count Esben sighed and coaxed with tempting glances and secret signs when he rode past the young woman's windows. When he was sure that she did not resent his advances he seized the first possible opportunity to invite her and Clas Bryde to the castle. Meanwhile the husband had got an inkling of what was going on, and when the time came he only feigned drunkenness. While his head sank lower and lower on his chest, he noticed the tender glances which were being exchanged between his wife and the count. Scarcely had the two disappeared from the hall, where they imagined they had left the husband overcome by drunken sleep, before Clas Bryde stood up, went to one of the windows, and gave the

arranged signal to a small band of waiting friends. With weapons in hand they forced their way into the castle, overcame the unsuspecting guard, whom they gagged, found, led by Clas Bryde, the open door to the secret passage, in which they saw, far off, the pale light of vanishing torches, and hastened forward through the darkness. . . .

Of the drama, which was acted deep under the fjord, the legend tells the following: When, next morning, the servants in the castle found the guard, and were frightened by his story, they discovered that the door to the secret passage had slammed to by itself. It took some time before the heavy iron bars could be forced, but as soon as it was opened they found the unhurt bodies of three of Clas Bryde's friends. After a hopeless attempt to force the door they had been suffocated. Further along the passage they found the bodies of other suffocated men, and about half-way they came across the Count, the young woman, Clas Bryde, the two torch-bearers, and some others, all badly mutilated. Later it was said that a fisherman, who that night had been spearing eels on the fjord just above the secret passage, spoke of having heard sounds of clashing arms from the deep.

The sun has set. Grey dusk has fallen over the quiet courtyard. In the water behind us there is a heavy splash, and Greta catches my arm nervously. 'What was that?' she asks. 'Look,' I answered, and pointed to one of the boards which crossed the gutter. 'Now is the hour for the old castle-rats.

They start on their ghostly journey from the castle to the fjord. Now they are swimming, now they are walking, across the boards. Only keep quiet, they won't come up here, but just follow their accustomed way. They make quite a caravan; they are hastening down to the old secret passage, over which they watch so that nobody shall disturb its haunted sleep in the darkness of mysterious legend.'

'What have the rats to do with the secret passage?' asks Greta.

'Come along, and I will tell you.'

I lead her to a trap-door in the corner of the yard. Through the trap, which I open, we look down into a dark, stone vault, from which comes up to us a clammy, misty, funereal atmosphere.

'When these crypt-like vaults—we won't enter them, for at this hour it is scarcely comfortable—were excavated during the last century it is said that they found again the secret passage which for years and years had been lost, and which they had ceased to believe had ever existed. One of the workmen offered to enter, and with great expectancy the others awaited the result. They heard his step and his gay song further and further away. It seemed clear that the passage was open. Then everything grew quiet. They waited and waited, but he never came back. The town magistrate promised freedom to a prisoner if he would make another attempt. He was a happy-go-lucky fellow who feared neither God nor devil. He made the

bargain. A rope was tied round his waist at which he should pull in case of danger. The fellow went down gaily enough and disappeared. The rope, which dragged after him, showed those watching that he found an open way many yards ahead. Suddenly the rope stopped moving. They thought he had come across some obstacle which he was trying to remove. Meanwhile the time of waiting grew uncannily long. It was thought that perhaps the man had fainted. They began to pull back the rope. It came back without its burden. The rats had gnawed the rope through and kept the man. There is still seen in the vault a rusty iron door, and within some few stone steps leading downwards.’

Again we stood outside, where the poplars and the red-cloaked soldier keep guard. Smiling, Greta looked at the castle and said: ‘Who would think that this ugly building could frighten anybody, and yet I felt anything but courageous just now.’

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘it is like that with the entire old town. To the person who hastens carelessly through it, it seems only an ordinary everyday provincial place. But for him to whom it opens its heart it reveals treasures of rich poetry and weird legends.’

3rd OF SEPTEMBER.

LAST night we had the first autumn storm. I XVIII lay in bed listening to it.

High up from the wood a blast of wind comes roaring; it hurles itself against the woodwork of the pavilion till it shakes in every part, and then

rushes further on down over the hill to the town. Blast follows blast, over and over again the same game, wilder and more violent. The trees are sighing and moaning. The storm gives no quarter. That which has not the strength to stand must fall.

Storm, the great destroyer and up-rooter, rages round me. But I know no fear. I laugh straight into its face; you do not frighten me, do not reach me; once you had your claws in me, but I escaped from you. In happy arrogance I bless the storm. It blows in the autumn, the happy time, when there will be still more quiet on Rough-Hill, the time when Rough-Hill will belong only to Greta and to me. To-night, when I left the miller's house, and she saw me to the door, she said: 'Look, now the sky is full of autumn. The birds of passage are flying south, and folk from the capital are leaving the quiet places. Are you not beginning to long for the big town?'

'And if I went away,' I asked, 'would you miss me?'

Her eyes grew moist while they looked into mine, and she answered: 'I think it must be so terribly hard to say good-bye. Promise me, that if you go away, you will leave without saying farewell.'

'I shall not leave until *you* say farewell.'

I hurried out into the coming storm, but when from the wood I turned and looked back she still stood in the doorway gazing after me.

7th OF SEPTEMBER.

WHY don't I tell her that I love her? Is it **XIX** through fear that it would make her sad or displease her? It is certainly not that. From a thousand tiny things she must have understood how dear and precious she is to me. Every day she sees, without my telling her, how my love is growing in strength. She watches it with smiles in her eyes and blushing roses in her cheeks.

I do not speak because I hardly dare to disturb our souls' meeting in this time of trusting stillness. Because I feel as if we sat hand in hand listening to a murmuring song across the waters on a summer evening.

THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

IT is the time of the fruit harvest. The work **XX** goes apace busily and merrily in the miller's garden.

Amongst the workmen, on the lawn under all the heavily-laden trees, the miller sits in his easy-chair directing the work in spite of his blindness. He knows all the trees in the garden, and points them out in the order in which they have to be taken; he tells how the fruit of each tree has to be picked, and receives the baskets as they are filled, examining and valuing the contents.

Greta superintends the picking, for which several men and girls have been hired; she herself takes part in the work and has pressed me into the service. She and I look after the finest fruit, which grows on glass-covered walls, and which has to be

handled with special care. I stand on the steps and pick the fruit ; she stands below with her apron spread out. But she often scolds me for my laziness, for it happens again and again when I hand down the fruit that I lose myself in admiration of her uplifted, blushing face, which seems to me more beautiful than any fruit. But of what use is it for her to scold ; she only looks more charming in her pretended impatience.

When the dew begins to fall the picking stops, and the baskets are carried into the store-rooms, which are filled with shelves from floor to ceiling, and where Greta goes through the difficult task of sorting the fruit. First that which is sent to the fastidious but well-paying merchants of the capital ; next that which the street-venders get at a cheap price ; after that the fruit specially suited for jam-making and preserving, and, last of all, what must be kept for home use during the winter. What a wonderful perfume there is in these store-rooms ! All the sweet and sour scents from baskets and shelves, condensed in the closed-in rooms, are blended into an intoxicating perfume, which long after clings to one's clothes. How splendid Greta looks as, with sleeves turned up from her strong white arms, she takes piece after piece in her sun-burnt hands, and, after quickly examining it, places it according to its rank and value. But best of all I like to think of her as she stood below the steps near the fruit wall. If I wrote poetry that is the picture I should like to describe.

'It is the fruit harvest time. In the miller's garden stands his daughter, the high-bosomed maid, with her arms full of luxuriant grapes.'

OCTOBER.

IN the well-garden, which lies between the town **XXI** and Rough-Hill, the tiny babies have their playground. When the weather is fine they are taken there by mothers, nurses or maids, either riding in their cradle carriages, or tripping on their stumpy legs. A large, circular space, shaded by big trees, and surrounded by long benches, forms the meeting-place. Here there is built a small wooden booth, from which is sold milk and biscuits, liquorice, carob-bean and tempting red-striped sugar-sticks. In the middle of the place stands a forbidding-looking bronze statue of a patriotic hero who looks on with unmoved severity.

On our way to the town Greta and I often pass through the well-garden. For me it means a revival of my very earliest memories from the time I was an impressionable little soul who, in anger, put out my tongue at the wind, and wept with fear every time my nurse-maid, according to the frank custom of the garden, took me to perform a very natural errand at the feet of the warlike general. But first and foremost I enjoy watching Greta's delight over the children. With radiant eyes she follows their gracefully clumsy tumblings about, and she finds them equally fascinating whether they are chattering and laughing, or whether they

suddenly start a despairing howl. But most of all, she loves the tiny babies who lie in their carriages looking out into the world with big, astonished eyes. It happened to-day that we saw a young mother take up her tiny baby and lay it at her full, white bosom, which it sucked with greedy mouth and grasped with eager, little hands. With tender adoration Greta's eyes hung on the picture, and when at last she tore herself away, and we continued our walk, I saw that she had tears in her eyes.

Later, when we spoke about her love for children she said: ' My greatest wish is to be the mother of many children and live on Rough-Hill where there is room enough for them to play about. I could not imagine being married, even if I loved my husband ever so much, without having children. Is there anything more beautiful for the woman who loves her husband than to give him children? Is there anything more wonderful than to be called mother? To know and to feel, to hear it in the very sound of the words that one is not living in vain, but that there is some one to whom one is a necessity. My husband would not lose by the love I would give our children. I would love him still more because he was their father. But because I feel like this, I cannot understand, and am quite horrified when I read about the young women in modern literature. It almost seems as though they looked upon children as a danger to their happiness. And even more than that, they grumble and rebel against the cruelty of nature which makes

them bear their children in pain, as if they were not rewarded tenfold for the bitterest suffering the moment they hold their child in their arms, as if it could possibly be worth while being a mother if one did not pay the penalty of pain.

' At first I thought, " It is the men who in sympathetic pity write so foolishly about something they do not understand," but later on I read the same in still stronger words in books written by women who pretended to speak for women. These women writers, often wives and mothers, seem quite offended that nature has laid the burden of motherhood on woman, thus keeping her from taking part in what they think more important objects of life. I don't understand these women, they terrify me. I see them before me with faces disfigured by their revolt against nature. To read their books makes me ill and sad.'

But Greta added, after a pause: ' You see, I think that why I feel this so strongly is because I lost my mother when I was so tiny. All the unsatisfied longing for a mother's tenderness has developed the mother feeling in me. I, who did not know what it was to sit on a mother's lap, could not bear even as a little girl to see a child without taking it up in my arms and cuddling it.'

Thus talked the motherless about the motherless. And while she walked there in her radiant health, speaking her thoughts so proudly and purely, I felt that I could not give my son a better fate than to be born of such a mother.

OCTOBER.

XXII **W**E stop outside a long, narrow, dirty yellow house in a narrow side-street. In each window, sheltered by wall-flowers and geraniums, sits an old woman with a coloured knitted shawl round her shoulders.

In this house, I tell Greta, live the poor old women who are not grand enough to become members of the institution. The house consists of one long room, divided by cotton hangings into twenty cubicles, ten on each side, in each of which an old woman lives. When I was a child, one of them was called Ann Marie. She is the only person from whom I ever inherited anything.

Ann Marie was a consumptive sewing-maid. I do not know exactly how old she was, but she must have been pretty well on in years to have got one of the charitable cubicles. The last time I saw her she had still her childlike face, with a smooth, white skin and two smiling, brown eyes. She had the tiniest figure I have ever seen. Like a modest little shadow, she crept along the street, wearing her peasant cap and a green woollen shawl round her slender shoulders. She lived rent free in the house, but had to find her own food. This she did by sewing for people in the town, having a day each week with six different families. Any great ability in the art of the needle Ann Marie did not possess, but nobody excelled her in the way of darning and patching, and there never was a linen or woollen garment ragged enough for her to throw

away. The families she worked for were certainly not cheated, and one could not accuse her of being exorbitant in her demands. Her salary, which she refused to have raised, considering it quite sufficient, was six skilling ($2\frac{1}{2}$ d.) a day. But of course she had her food, and in regard to the food people spoiled Ann Marie by always trying to give her her favourite dishes. One cannot say that this meant any great extravagance on the part of the housewife, and it made her visit doubly welcome for us children, for Ann Marie had also in regard to food retained a decided childishness. If she should have mentioned the menu that tempted her most she would, without hesitation, have answered sweet soup and pancakes.

From my earliest childhood and until we left the town Ann Marie came to our house every Thursday. If she was a little shadow in the street, she became a ray of sunshine in the house. She was always content, always full of gratitude for her happiness, and for everybody's kindness to her,—always smiling with her big, brown child's eyes. But it was only when she was alone with us children that she became talkative. Grown-up people frightened her a little with their seriousness and common sense. But with children she felt in the right element, their little sorrows and joys she understood as though they were her own. Their ideas and interests were also hers. All the afternoon, after we came home from school, we sat with her in the

ironing-room, chatting cosily and happily as with one of our own age. But when the day came that we had to leave the old town she stood at the steamer and wept as if her heart would break.

She never forgot her little friends.

Years went by. I was already a big boy who had passed my first exams., when a letter came saying that Ann Marie was dead. This Ann Marie to whom I, with usual childish forgetfulness, had scarcely given a thought, had made my brother and me, with two other children, her heirs. The inherited capital was fifty daler (£5), to be divided equally, twelve and a half daler to each. Fifty daler! that meant eight hundred work-days' salary saved together, six skilling by six skilling.

I used my share in travelling. Thanks to Ann Marie's savings I had a delightful fortnight's walking trip after my exams. were finished.

'And therefore, Greta, tears come into my eyes when I look at this poor house where the old women are sitting in the windows behind wall-flowers and geraniums.'

NOVEMBER.

XXIII **M**Y friend in the institution is the only acquaintance Greta and I visit. A little while ago we invited her to a chocolate party in my attic on Rough-Hill. She was fetched in a cab, had whipped cream on the chocolate, and when she again departed in her carriage she took with her a basket filled with fruit and little pots of

jam which Greta had brought her. In short she was, as she herself expressed it, treated exactly like a princess in one of the fairy tales she made herself, when I was a child. We have also visited her, and been her honoured guests.

Greta has completely won my friend who, I am sure, would have great difficulty in saying for which of us her old heart beats the warmest. It annoys and bewilders her not a little that we are not engaged, but she has evidently not yet given up all hope that this may happen. When we visit her she draws first one then the other aside, praising in extravagant words Greta to me and me to Greta.

To me her constant story is, 'Isn't she lovely? Did he ever see such a heaven-blessed girl? Doesn't she shine with sheer goodness of heart? How bright her eyes are when she looks at him. It is certainly easy to see with half an eye whom she likes best.'

Yesterday she had invited us to a big coffee party. To her great sorrow we told her not to invite the clergyman, so she had to restrict herself to asking only the more prominent ladies in the institution, but on the whole the party was very successful. The repast was right royal. The coffee kettle never went off the boil, and the plates with cake were refilled the moment they looked a little empty. The conversation could scarcely have been more lively, for the moment one lady finished the description of her troubles and illnesses the next one began. Towards the

end my friend proposed to show us an interesting card game, and the other old ladies were already feverishly excited about this performance. But Greta who, from former experience, knew the intention of the game, remembering such hints as 'flutterings near the heart' with 'secret messages' and a 'sighing friend,' and all the other paraphernalias belonging to the trade, showed clearly enough that she wished to be spared this ordeal before such a large company of matchmakers.

She accepted therefore with a grateful glance my proposal that we should leave the game till another day, and that instead she should finish the feast by singing some of her songs in the spinning-room for the old ladies.

In this room they all keep their spinning-wheels, and while the wheels run round the tongues wag about the affairs of the institution. But the spinning-room also does service as a chapel, and is therefore furnished with an harmonium. Messages have been sent out of the coming event, and when we, led by my friend, who feels at least as important as if she was the directrice of the opera, walk into the room, it is already filled. With hastily donned Sunday caps the old women sit in rows, shy and devout, as though they were at communion. Slender and strong, in fair and shining youth, Greta stands amongst them like a bright birch-tree shot up in a thicket of withering, stunted undergrowth. But all the wrinkled and worn old women feel, when they see her, a reflex of spring in their

own hearts, and their murmured admiration sets all their old heads nodding.

The room grows quiet as the grave when Greta sits down at the harmonium, strikes a few notes and starts her song. The air in the low, crowded room is thick and heavy. Through it the notes ripple clear as dew, ascend like twittering birds, twinkle like merry sunrays, spread around a fragrance of wood and field, building above the heads of the old women an azure dome. They are old songs, sweetly sentimental, gaily gentle songs from our mothers’ and grandmothers’ days, that Greta sings. The old people are listening; these songs make strings long since untouched vibrate within them, and gradually all the old lips are moving, and the frilled caps are keeping time to Greta’s song. The songs about love’s joy and love’s pain are those that find the most responsive echo. For every kiss on rosy lips happy smiles pass over the wrinkled faces, but, when pale cheeks are bathed in tears, tears also fill a hundred old eyes.

My seat is at the back of the room, near that of my friend. She, who is otherwise never lacking in words, seems now so moved she can hardly speak, but she pats my hand incessantly. When Greta at last leaves the harmonium and is surrounded by thanking, hand-kissing, courtesying and blessing old women, my friend says these words, for which I could have kissed her: ‘ Dear me, dear me, how like she is to his blessed mother.’

DECEMBER.

XXIV I WALK with Greta to my mother's grave. It is winter-dark in the graveyard. In the black garden of death only the white crosses shine. It has just been raining, and noiselessly we walk across the fallen leaves.

Death seems greater and more sinister in his winter-garment. In summer time we cover his strange terror with multi-coloured flowers and smiling foliage. We try to make death gentle and sweet with the rich offerings of summer. But in winter death stands in all his sinister majesty, spreads out his sombre cloak and fastens his cross-bone mark to every tree in the graveyard.

I walk with Greta through the winter-dark graveyard, but the horror of death does not frighten me. I walk in league with the great Lord of Life, and it seems to me, that Death withdraws as we walk forward.

We sit down on the bench at the grave, and Greta says, 'Though you have often talked to me about your mother, you have never told me what she looked like. Yet when she died, you must have been old enough to have a vivid memory of her.'

'The clearest image I have of my mother is not from her very last years. It is from the time, before illness had ravaged her, from the time she was still young and beautiful, or, at least, seemed so to me. I see her on a beautiful summer day standing in the middle of the lawn in our garden. She wore a

light shawl gracefully draped round her shoulders and stood amongst us children who were playing round her. I have never since seen a woman who knew how to wear a shawl so gracefully. A large garden hat framed the fine oval of her face, and the dark hair was parted smoothly over her brow, a clear and white brow. With radiant eyes she stood amongst her playing children, when suddenly a canary came flying towards her and rested on her shoulder. She lifted her hand warningly. For a while the bird sat on her shoulder, rubbing its beak lovingly against her cheek, then it flew away.'

I took Greta's hand which rested in her lap and continued: 'Yes, Greta, it is like this I remember my mother. But if you wish to know more about her, then ask our old friend in the institution. She says, and I am sure that she is right, that you are her living image.'

Greta looks at me with big, loving eyes, and I feel her arms round my neck, and her lips against mine, and arm-in-arm we stand in quiet thought in front of mother's grave.

But when later we walk homewards to Rough-Hill, I say, 'Do tell me how it happened, that you came to love me,' and she answered: 'I understood you needed me, and from that moment my heart was yours.'

Later she says, 'Promise me that when I die you will bury me near your mother. My own mother's grave is near another town far away from Rough-Hill. And I should like so much to think that

you could always find your mother and me together.' But when she sees that her words make me sad, she adds with a smile, 'You dear, foolish man, don't think that I am going to die. I have never blessed life more than now.'

DECEMBER.

XXV **E**ACH time in my life when I had gained what I called happiness and I searched my own heart to see if happiness really dwelt there, I always found in some corner or other the weak spot, where the worm of doubt secretly worked behind its cover of roses. I knew then, that sooner or later, the moment would come when all my happiness would wither.

Doubt is easily kept alive, a restless glance, a reckless word will nourish it. You sit an evening with your beloved and you suddenly see coming into her eyes a strange thought or a strange memory. You question her and she answers with an absent-minded smile. It is all over in a moment. She forgets it and you forget it while you hold her in your arms. But when, in the lonely night, the picture of your beloved stands clear in your soul, you see her with eyes of cold deceit and with an ironical smile that stiffens your heart. What does it matter that she meets you the following day more lovingly than ever. You may imagine you are safe for a day, a week, or a month, but the worm has bitten its venom into your happiness. You are its prey.

There are those who in poor blindness try to make themselves contented with such mean happiness. There are others who in attempted cynicism insist that security kills happiness. There is only one happiness, to be at peace in happiness. To know that the day rises with the same sun that set yesterday, to desire nothing, to fear nothing, not to wish any day over again or any day different, because each day is equally happy.

That happiness, the only one, is mine. More than most people I have chased happiness. I have sought it out in the world, where men make their fortunes, and I have been up early and out late trying to find it, I have excited myself and tired myself out in the pursuit. Then suddenly it came to me like a gentle song in a quiet, far-away place. I heard it murmuring over the water on a beautiful summer night. I dare not call, fearing to frighten it away, but in humble faith I opened my heart to it, and lo and behold! one day I found it singing within.

I have searched my heart, but no doubt is hidden there. I have been awake through lonely nights, but no shadow fell across Greta’s lovely image.

In a white boat I glide down a sunlit river, and in my hand I hold a golden fruit, pure and perfect.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

WHEN this afternoon I arrive at the miller’s, XXVI
I find two Christmas guests besides myself.
They are Greta’s god-daughter, the four-year-old

Asta, and her two-year-old brother Carl, children of a fisherman down by the fjord, who in his youth helped at the mill. For the first time in their lives they are going to have a Christmas tree, on which occasion they shine with overstarched cleanliness and unnatural good behaviour. On seeing me, a strange man, they seek cover behind Greta, who pulls them out and shakes them up, so that they should be presented to me in all their beauty. And beautiful they are. Asta, an exact copy of a Christmas tree angel, caressing and confiding, with yellow curly head and large blue eyes, and Carl, a stumpy little person, sailor—silent with male conceit and brown eyes, which twinkle with sly humour.

The Christmas supper is over and we walk into the garden room where the tree is lit. Greta has the boy in her arms and Asta she holds by the hand. After them comes the miller and I with our pipes. To begin with the children are mute with astonishment, with wide-open eyes they are gazing at the tree, while Greta dances about with them. I whisper to her: 'I believe you are the happiest of the three.' 'Yes, of course,' she answers; 'fancy spending Christmas with you and two such darlings.'

But it is not long before the children frankly forget themselves in their happiness, and when they discover that the splendours of the tree are fruits that can be picked, they become quite off their heads with joy. They finish by rolling round on the floor like two kittens amongst all their

treasures, filling the usually quiet room with laughter and joyous shouts. Until they become tired and sleepy, and with tiny, blinking eyes have to be carried round to say good-bye. But when Greta has put them to bed, she comes back and sits down on the sofa between her father and me.

The candles are still burning on the tree, and the old miller says, 'I fancy there are more candles this year. Last Christmas it was quite dark round me, but this year it seems to me I am able to see the light.'

'Yes, father dear,' Greta says, laying her head on my shoulder, 'there are more lights this year; last Christmas you and I were alone, and for my own sake I did not care to light so many candles. But this year there has been real Christmas on Rough-Hill with love and children, and every Christmas Eve it will be like this, for this dear one,' and she takes my hand and lays it in the old man's, 'he will stay with us—that is if you will give him and me your consent.'

The old man kisses Greta and presses my hand warmly, while two big tears roll from his blind eyes and he says, 'God bless you my children and give you many bright days on Rough-Hill. You, my son, I have never seen, shall never see, but your voice, when we spoke about Greta, told me that you loved her.'

Before I leave, Greta leads me into the bedroom where Asta and Carl lie in her old cot. They sleep sweetly in each other's arms, Asta sheltering her

little brother in motherly fashion. We bend down carefully and kiss them, it does not waken them, but they smile in their sleep, as if they felt the love which is so near to them. Then Greta kisses me and says: 'Think how wonderful it would be, if those two were our very own.'

Greta comes out with me on to the hill. It is the most beautiful, frosty, starlit night. We stand on the crest of the hill looking out over the fjord. On our right slopes down the white wood, it is so quiet that we can hear when a branch cracks in the frost. In front, deep below, the ice-covered fjord and the town, where Christmas lights are shining in all the houses.

'Now, there is peace on earth,' Greta whispers. 'Yes, and peace in the hearts of men,' I answered.

But when we turn the mill stands over us with its large black wings. I notice that a shudder goes through Greta, and I say, 'Did the mill frighten you?'

'No,' she answered, 'but I have been standing here too long and am feeling cold.'

NEW YEAR.

XXVII **F**ROST and snow have locked up the old town. For many days no message from the outside world has reached it. But with well-stocked larders and Christmas cheer in the air the town feels none of the discomforts of a besieged fortress. It lives its own life all the more strongly;

like a hen it gathers its chickens under its maternal wings ; it forgets that it is busily developing into a provincial town with banks and export trade. Once again it becomes its own self, quite the old town.

When I meet the tingling sledge caravans with merry, fur-clad men and women, when I hear the gaily ringing laughter and the shouts from the children tobogganing down the snowy slopes of Rough-Hill, when I see the fjord black with skating figures, and when in the evening I hear songs and dance music pour out through the festively-lit windows, I remember the severe winter of many years ago. After the town had laboriously dug itself out of the snow, it went to the fjord and kept carnival through weeks and weeks.

It stands out in my memory most fantastically, through a large gateway built of evergreens one got into a long ice-street cosily cut out amongst walls of snow. Suddenly one stood on a big, open place, brilliantly lit by torches, and surrounded by tents illuminated with coloured lanterns. Tents, in which they ate and drank, sung and danced. From the square other streets have been cut into the snow mountains. One passes by caves shining with blue lights, snow-men with glaring fire-eyes, tiny booths with train-oil lamps, and old women frying eels and pancakes, also a big warming place called ‘The Glowing Oven.’ Afterwards one got into a wood of fir-trees, where people crowded round a merry-go-round with sledges, which possessed the enlivening quality that on each round a

sledge turned a somersault in the snow. The snow-town stretched further and further; we children never reached the end of it, for we heard rumours of brawling and drunken quarrels going on in its furthest suburbs, where the working men of the old town met their enemies and rivals from the other side of the fjord.

We children stayed where lights and innocence reigned, where our sisters and their school friends flew past us with their cavaliers, and where they danced the Lancers on skates, all the more amusing for not being very perfect. About supper-time the entire town would be on the fjord. Then came the parents to fetch their young daughters and children, or they brought the supper out in baskets. One joined forces with friends and acquaintances and made up a big table with all the delicacies of the various picnic baskets. When afterwards we walked home we saw rockets shoot up across the fjord, where the noisy carnival gaiety continued far into the night.

To-day Greta and I went for a drive in a sledge. Down by the fjord we stopped and went out on the ice amongst the skaters. There was laughter and life, but none of the fairy-tale scenes from the old days. I felt disappointed in watching the smooth, well-swept surface, where everything was arranged in true sportsmanlike fashion. More eagerly therefore I turned to the memories of old days. It was some time before I discovered that Greta, who is usually so bright, walked silent at my

side, an expression of wistful sadness in her eyes. Anxiously I asked her what was the matter, and she said: 'Forgive me, dear, it is sheer childishness. But while we walked here amongst all these people, who breathlessly seem to chase pleasure, a fear of losing you overcame me. It seemed to me that they would take you away from me. It was as if your talk hurried along with them, far, far away. Forgive me, please remember how little I am accustomed to be amongst the many. Remember it is the first time we have left our quiet places.'

She smiled tenderly again to me, pressing my arm. But I led her quickly away from the skating throng, mounted again into the waiting sledge, and returned to our quiet places.

7th OF JANUARY.

TO-day the post arrived by sleigh. It brought XXVIII me a letter from my publisher, who teasingly asked if I was not tired of my hermit life, and if he could not tempt me to return by offering me the management of a large literary undertaking he contemplates starting. The conditions he offered me were so good that I need not fear financial difficulties for the future.

Some months ago I would perhaps have hesitated, now my answer needs no reflection. I dip my pen at once and write that I cannot accept his kind offer as I have become here the happiest man in the world, and because my happiness is tied to this corner of the earth. That irrevocably I have

given up any thought of returning, and that my part in literary and public life for the future must consist merely in writing books. That the book he expects will soon arrive, and that it will be followed by others which will just as little resemble my former ones. That I have pitched my tent on Rough-Hill, where the air is pure and clear, where life's meaning is easily understood, where passion is deeper and sensations more simple. Ending by saying that my happiness is so sure that it needs neither repentance nor accusations, but that on the contrary it can afford to be thankful for all past things, for without these it would not be so great.

Before sending off my answer, I showed the publisher's letter to Greta. After reading it, and waiting for a minute, she said: 'This gives me a chance of telling you something I have been thinking ever since that day on the ice. I dare not keep you here; for a short time you will be content, but sooner or later all that you came from will call you back. This is both right and natural, and therefore you ought to know that I don't want to be a hindrance to you. Do as you will and as you must, and do with me as you please. Leave me here, if you fear that I should become a stumbling block in your career, which you have every reason to think after my silly behaviour the other day. Or take me with you, if you think I can be of use to you; and if you can trust my word that I am quite cured from my foolishness I am willing to go with you wherever you wish.

Hitherto Rough-Hill has been my home, but now without you I should be homeless even there. The life and the world outside frightened me before, but with you I know no fear. If you tell me that I ought to stay here for father’s sake, then I must tell you that it is not father who has kept me here. Sometimes I even think that he himself would like to leave, and perhaps it would be better for him. After all he is old, and of late his mind has often been worried by curious thoughts he gets here in the stillness. It seems he is afraid of the mill; he fancies it calls him, that it reproaches him for having stopped it. No, indeed, I am doing father no wrong in leaving; but if you prefer me to stay here and wait for you, that also would be right. Perhaps you would like to be alone for some time to try your own heart and see whether it was the loneliness only that made you need me. Anything you decide I will do; I know it would be for the best, for I love you.’

I allowed Greta to speak out. Was it cruel and hard of me, dear love? Was it selfish of me that my soul could not bear to lose one of the blessed words which fell like blood from your anxious heart? I trust you will forgive me on account of the greater joy my answer gave you; my answer, which you had in black and white, in the letter to the publisher.

THE END OF JANUARY.

XXIX **G**RETA has never asked me about my past, generally the first question a man has to answer his beloved. I asked myself could it be due to ignorance? No, I think not. Greta's knowledge of life is clear and distinct. She speaks frankly about things that other young girls think it a sign of innocence to blush over. Could it then be due to excess of faith in me?

I did not wish to have any doubt or misconception about this, so one day I asked her.

I have never seen Greta so amused. She laughed so heartily in such an exuberant way that she could hardly stop. At last she cried; 'Really, you are too funny. In a half-offended way you ask me whether I believe you have lived like the old ladies in the institution. No, my dear boy, you need not worry about that. You have too forcibly impressed the public with your dissipations for anybody to be ignorant of what a terrible person you are.'

She laughed again so that I became quite embarrassed. But as she became more serious she said, as we went through the wood: 'Let us sit down on this bench and I will tell you why your terrible past does not worry me, but on the contrary reassures me, and shows me that this is the first time you feel what I at all events call real love. Afterwards you can tell me if I am right or wrong.'

'First, I should like to say that my confidence has nothing to do with the common belief that a man must always use a great deal of his youth in

sowing his wild oats. To begin with, I don't believe they have as many to sow as people imagine. No, my confidence has quite another reason, which I thought out for myself, and which I think is true enough. In all your confessions I have sought in vain for—the *child*. You have spent many enthusiastic words in describing the beauty of your mistresses. You have furnished them with all the virtues. But one thing you denied them—the right to bear your children. Perhaps you did this quite unconsciously, but to me it seems that you most carefully avoided the question of children, in which I see the beginning and end of all true love. What value can a woman have for a man when he does not wish her to give him the fruit of their embrace. For after all this is the great wonder, the joy beyond all joy, in the embrace between man and woman, that there meets their love's longing for eternity, the longing to know themselves united into a far future through the children, and again their children, and so on through the ages. If I lay in your arms and felt your love waver for fear of the child, I should feel it a deep shame. I should think you found me good enough for sensual pleasure and for fleeting passion, but that you would not honour me by allowing me to bear your embodiment of eternity.

'While now I can be proud and confident, because I believe I am the first whom you have wished to see as your children's mother, and I feel no envy of your past, or of the women who

filled it. If they loved you I would pity them, for their hearts must, even while you gave them the most passionate words, have felt the disappointment of the void. If they did not love you no pity need be wasted on them. They found what they sought. Not one of them took anything of the happiness your love promises me.

'Have I,' asked Greta, 'been wrong in not worrying about your past?'

But without answering, I knelt down and laid my head in her lap.

FEBRUARY.

XXX **I**T is, as Greta says, there is something wrong with the old miller.

We have discovered that several times of late while we have been out, he has crept over to the mill. We became suspicious from some vague words he said, and the other day we saw him just as he came out. He crept along like one afraid of being surprised, turned the key very quietly, and listened to every step.

We have been inside the mill to see if we can discover what he is doing, but everything was apparently untouched.

In reality there is nothing curious in the fact that the old man now and again wishes to move about in the mill, which holds so many memories for him. But what is curious is the way in which he pays his secret visits, and the care with which he tries to hide them from us. At the same time, saying things which betray him.

One day, when Greta had left the room, and he and I sat on the sofa together, he moved close to me and whispered : ‘ I think you must have noticed that Greta does not like my going over to the mill. Has she told you her reason? No. Well, shall I tell you what I think? She is afraid because I am old and blind; she fears I cannot any longer take care of myself, and that an accident might happen. Greta is a good daughter and takes such care of me that I don’t like to upset her. But if I had anything to do I am sure I should find my way on Rough-Hill and in the mill as well as any young person with two strong eyes.’

On the whole his mind dwells in an unhealthy fashion on the mill. It is not only when he talks in his sleep at night, to which Greta has sometimes listened, but in broad daylight, that his thoughts hover about it. He talks about it as though the mill were a human being who had a grudge against him, and whose revenge he fears.

The other night he said to me : ‘ Don’t you think that a mill that stands still in this way is a curious thing? If it was old and dilapidated, it would be different, but nothing is amiss with this mill, it has got its machinery in order inside as well as out, and its meaning in this world is, after all, to work as long as it is able. You see there is something humiliating in the fact that people who do not know better, who did not know it when it was the best mill in the neighbourhood, might think that it could not work at all. No, I have not treated the mill fairly.

I ought either to have sold it to a younger man when I got old and tired, or I should have shot it like a master does his hound when he is no longer able to take it into field and forest, and does not wish to see it another man's property.'

Greta who had entered and heard the last words, made a sign to me and I answered: 'Yes, miller, I agree with you, it seems a pity for the mill. You would do well to have it pulled down. Then it would be dead and gone, and at peace, and you would have more peace too.'

'Yes, I suppose it will come to that,' said the miller. 'But though it may be right, it is not an easy thing to do. One never knows if there might not be more work for it to do, if not in my time, then when another man takes my place.'

'Yes, father dear,' interrupted Greta, 'but the new man has come and he has no use for the mill either.'

'No, that is true enough,' said the old man smilingly. 'The new man has also left his mill.'

But later Greta and I talked it over and came to the conclusion, that come what may, we must get the old man's permission for the destruction of the mill.

LAST DAYS OF FEBRUARY.

XXXI **W**E have decided to get married in May. Why should we wait? In the miller's house there is room enough and food enough. The little more we need I can get by writing. For the present

the remaining part of the money I got for my last book shall be used for Greta’s bridal-dress. She scolds me for my extravagance, but I want her to be the finest and most beautiful bride the old town has ever seen. The wedding is going to be solemnised in the little village-church close to the institution, and no one will be admitted but the old ladies. Our friend and three other good virgins from the institution are going to be bridesmaids and accompany my Greta to the altar. After the ceremony is over, we are going to drink a glass of champagne in the institution with the wedding guests, but there is also to be sweet French wine for those who prefer it. On our way home we will let the carriage stop outside the graveyard, for Greta wishes to lay her bridal wreath on my mother’s grave—the grave that united us. After that we shall make our entrance at Rough-Hill as husband and wife, and shall move into the upper story of the miller’s house, which has been empty and unoccupied ever since Greta’s mother died. It will be in May, the beech-trees will just be out, the air full of fragrance, and in the wood, on Rough-Hill, the nightingale will be singing his songs of love.

The days pass quickly, while Greta and I are living our great happiness, dreaming of the still greater which awaits us in the spring. In the morning we generally go for a long walk. Sometimes we walk through the remote lanes and streets of the town, their sight alone takes me back to far-

away times, and some of them, especially the very old Students Lane, wind in and out amongst steps, tumbled-down cottages, and crumbling walls, and are so narrow that we must walk along them in single file.

Sometimes we walk along the open country roads, where one can see far out over the land, and one's thoughts take long journeys into the future. Refreshed by the cold air, warm and flushed with the healthy exercise we return home to our work. I to my book, which is now well advanced, and Greta to her outfit.

From her mother's time the chests and cupboards are well stocked with all kinds of linen, strong homespun goods. But Greta will not go a lazy bride to her bridal bed, she will furnish it with sheets, which are hemmed, stitched, and initialled by her own hands. And as the bed, so the bridal house shall be. All day long the sewing machine is going, and in the evenings the needle flies in and out, while I sit by and often interrupt the work by kissing the dear, busy hands.

One evening I found Greta occupied by cutting some fine linen into tiny pieces. I sit brooding over what in the world they could be for, and Greta, who notices my astonishment, smiles slyly. At last my curiosity gets the better of me, and I ask: 'Is it you or me who is going to be trimmed up with these dolls' clothes?'

'No,' she answers, 'they are going to be shirts for our first born.'

Half-laughingly, half-seriously I say, ‘Take care, dearest, that you are not too sure in your hope. Don’t you think there would be time enough later to make our child’s garments.’

She looks at me with tears in her eyes. ‘You must not talk like that. I won’t even think of anything so sad. What is the meaning of all our love, if I should not be able to bear your child, and your child must not come to a poor and unprepared home. Neither shall he wear clothes bought in the shops, strange clothes in which no loving thoughts are hidden. That is the reason I make his clothes now, while I am strong enough and quite well. What later will happen one never knows. But should I happen to die when he comes, you will, later on, when he is old enough to understand, be able to tell him that his mother had looked after him as far as she was able.

‘Therefore don’t be angry with me and don’t think that I am either sentimental or over-confident. Could God possibly be envious of the woman who thinks beforehand of the welfare of the child for whom she is ready to give her life.’

These last words she said to me, when in the dark evening we stood together on Rough-Hill, and she gave me her hand in farewell. I drew her towards me and whispered in her ear: ‘You dearest of all mothers.’

8th OF MARCH.

XXXII **I**T is now decided that the mill shall be demolished. The old man has given his consent, and in a fortnight the work is to be started. After at last having taken the decision, the miller seems more tranquil, and during the last few days, as far as we know, he has not paid any secret visits to the mill.

The decision about the mill has brought peace to us all. Without mentioning it to one another, Greta and I have both been afraid of an accident. How easily it might happen that the old blind man, moving about alone in the mill, might stumble on one of the steep ladders, fall through a trap, or hurt himself in the machinery. Now Greta has admitted, that often when she has refused a walk under the pretext that she was too busy, it was fear of leaving the father, which kept her at home.

Now everything is cosy and peaceful as before, and during the evening we all three sit talking about what the mount on which the mill is built shall be used for, when the mill has gone. The old man says that as the mill has hitherto served many of the sailors as a landmark, he ought to offer the site for the erection of some conspicuous object to serve the same purpose. But Greta thinks that many other points on Rough-Hill would be just as suitable for that, and that the mount being their very own, they have every right to use it as they please. She and I have a plan to which we hope her father will agree.

We want to build there a summer house in the style of an antique temple. Round it we will plant a row of sheltering fir-trees, but round the temple and its columns virginia creeper, eglantines, and caprifolium shall cluster as time goes on, and above its portal we will write in golden letters: To the God of Rough-Hill.

To the God of Rough-Hill, the God of peace, the God of our happiness, we will build our floral temple. Here we will sit together, gazing far out over the land and let the world go by in its noisy way; we will hear the hurricane roar, and see the storm break round us, sheltered by our quiet tent of peace. Here we will sit, while we are young and roses grow in our hearts; here we will sit when the old years come and the fragrance of memories are round us. Up here we will lead our children, while they are young and teach them to kneel to our God, and here we will await them, when tried in the battle of life, they seek rest in the temple of their childhood's home. But we think it would be most beautiful of all—and we smile at the ambitious flight of our dreams—when the day comes, when our son and his bride take our places amongst the roses and caprifoliums.

Together we will build our temple. But the day it is finished and we stand there together, I shall tell Greta, how long before I knew her, and long before I loved her, I had worshipped her as the goddess of peace, and built her a high-altar of the mill.

19th OF MARCH.

XXXIII **S**PRING is early this year. The last week's warm rain and hot sun have already helped the flowers in the wood to creep out from their coverlet of fallen leaves, and called forth the song of birds. It is just after sunrise when I fetched Greta for our walk. The morning sun has wakened me; I could not bear to sleep away the lovely hours, and whistling I stand outside the miller's house where everything is still closed. A curtain is pulled back and I catch sight of Greta in her white night-gown, with rich brown hair hanging over her shoulders, shining golden in the sun. She nods smilingly to me, and sends me such a merry good morning that the air seems filled with happiness. But when I think that all her radiant youth is mine, and that within a short time her white and lovely body will rest in my arms, I grow faint with joy.

We walk through the wood drinking the strong wine of spring, which the sun draws out of a thousand intoxicating essences. I see the blood mount in Greta's cheeks, I feel it throb in her hand as I hold it in mine. The wine of spring is in us, its enchanting drowsiness pours through our veins. Greta comes closer to me, and with her head against my shoulder, in a tired way she seeks my arm for support, and she whispers softly: 'Do you hear the same song as I do?'

'Which song do you hear?'

'I hear voices that call, and voices that tempt;

they play with each other, now plaintive and far, now sighing and near, now questioning, now answering, now melting together in joyous meeting of all harmonies. It seems to be nature’s bridal song which sings about us. Do you not hear it too?’

‘I hear nature call to a festival: spring out, ye flowers, sing out, ye birds, unfold, O trees! Awake, adorn thyself, and hasten lest ye be too late. Spring is already here, and when May-day dawns the princess of Rough-Hill will be a bride. I hear nature chant your wedding hymn.’

We are stopped in our walk by a river, which ordinarily is a shallow stream amongst big stones, but which the spring rains have filled to overflowing, only here and there a stone stands out. ‘I suppose we shall have to turn back?’ I asked.

Greta leant tenderly towards me and said: ‘The spring makes me lazy, don’t let us go a round-about way; don’t you think you can carry me?’

She puts her arms round my neck and I lift her and carry her out into the stream. I feel her soft body against mine, her warm breath on my face. I feel her no burden, but I grow faint and giddy, and must use my utmost will-power not to stagger and fall.

We sit down, both a little out of breath, on the bench on the other side of the river, but Greta leans her head against mine, saying in a murmur: ‘You, my strong bridegroom, how happy I was in your arms.’

Spring is early this year. Nature is ringing her wedding bells. The bridal folk are longing for the marriage morn.

21st OF MARCH.

XXXIV I HAVE got my papers from the capital, the papers without which one cannot marry even on Rough-Hill. I see from these necessary papers that during the first years of my life I was vaccinated, and that the operation was considered successful. Heaven be praised, or I might otherwise not have been permitted to enter into holy wedlock.

To-morrow, or the day after, begins the demolition of the mill. The old man was quite in good spirits this evening.

22nd OF MARCH.

XXXV G RETA has been hurt this morning by the mill. The doctor gives fair hope.

THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY.

XXXVI A FRESH storm blew up last night, though it did not seem very windy to me when I went up to the mill this morning, but perhaps I did not take much notice of the weather.

When from the wood I reached the crest of the hill, I saw Greta standing near the mill between the wings, just as I saw her that first day I came to Rough-Hill. I thought to myself, 'Then the workmen have not come yet; but it was perhaps too early.' And I thought further that Greta had probably gone up to the mill to say good-bye. She did not see me; she gazed out over the fjord. I swung my hat and called to her, but she did not hear me; she stood in deep thought, and most likely the wind carried away my words.

Suddenly the wings gave a jerk. I believe I shrieked. She either heard my shriek, or herself felt the danger. She turned her head, and our eyes met. She made a movement as if to rush forward, but in the same moment she fell to the ground without a sound, struck by one of the wings. The next wing followed over her body, and again the next. Round and round, with stronger and stronger speed, the wings went over Greta. While I rushed along, I thought to myself I have gone mad; it is the giddiness in my head which makes the mill seem to be turning round. But then I saw clearly that Greta’s body never moved. On the side of the mill, just in front of the steps, I found Greta’s father. He stood fastening the rope. He smiled in such a curious way. The thought rushed through my mind, ‘In madness he has killed his daughter!’ What a wild thought! In a flash I understood everything, and in passing him I said as calmly as possible: ‘Greta has been struck by one of the wings.’ When I reached her the mill was quiet; her father had stopped it. I bent over her; she did not move. Her face was white, but I saw neither wound nor blood. I called her name again and again. She opened her eyes and smiled, but closed them again at once, while the smile stayed on her lips. She had seen me and she smiled. O my God, she was not dead!

Sobbing sounded behind me, and a trembling hand touched my shoulder. It was the old man. ‘She is alive,’ I said, ‘but we must carry her in.’

I looked up, at a little distance stood three or four workmen gazing at us with pitiful eyes. They came quietly forward to help. One of them said : ' We have sent a message for the doctor.'

We carried her in and the doctor came.

This evening her condition is unaltered. She lies unconscious. The wing struck her on the right side of the head. There is only a scratch and a small swelling to be seen ; but the doctor fears either concussion of the brain or a fracture.

My fear as to the cause of the accident has proved to be true. Greta's father had wished to let the mill work once more before it was stilled for ever. At his secret visits he had made sure that the machinery was in order. Early this morning he went over to the mill, and was most likely inside, when Greta came. Owing to the noise of the strong wind she has not heard him moving about, or going out on the opposite side. Then he pulled the beam, and in the same moment the wind moved the wings and the accident happened.

So much I have been able to gather from the few words he has said. Most of the time he sits in mute despair. It is pitiful to see him—almost more painful than to be at Greta's quiet bedside. But when the workmen came and asked if they should start the work of demolition he let them go away. He would send for them when he needed them, he said.

24th OF MARCH.

SHE is dead. Greta, my dear, dear one is XXXVII dead.

All day yesterday we knew that there was no hope. Fever and delirium began during the night and in the morning the doctor left without a word. I could not ask; I understood it was hopeless.

I have been sitting at her bedside, and had to force my face to smile and look happy.

She fancied she was lying ill because she had given birth to our child. She was very happy, but wept now and again because she was not allowed to have the baby by her side. When I did not smile, she became more unhappy, saying that we were not telling her the truth, that the babe was dead and lost to her. During such moments the mill played an uncanny part in her hallucinations. She believed her father had carried her child over to the mill, and she implored me again and again to go and fetch it.

Towards evening the fever grew worse. The doctor came, but left very soon. I did not speak to him. Again I took my place at Greta’s side. She did not recognise me. Most of the time she lay with closed eyes, murmuring indistinct, bewildering words, her face twitching with pain. I thought it was almost better thus. Then I did not need to hide my sorrow, I could hold her poor feverish hand in mine and weep.

Suddenly she opened her eyes,—they were large

and clear: 'Are you crying, because I am going to die?' she asked.

I knelt down on the floor and laid my head on her pillow. Many times she stroked me tenderly with her hand and said:

'You must not cry for my sake; I am not unhappy. It is not so bad to die. Both your mother and mine are calling me. They smile lovingly to me, and show me that there is a place for me between them.'

A dark shadow crept into her eyes. She raised herself up in bed and cried out: 'My child, where is my child? It is cruel of you to keep me waiting so long.'

Then she fell back again, and again her eyes were clear, but big tears rolled down her face. 'My dear love, lay your head close to mine,' she said, 'there is something I want to tell you before I die, and while I can see clearly.'

I did as she asked me, and she whispered: 'I am not afraid to die, but I think it so terribly sad that I have to leave you before I have borne you the child we dreamt of. Now it seems so little you have as a memory of me, so little you have to thank me for. I gave myself to you only for such a short time, and even not that altogether. No, no, don't interrupt me: do let me be allowed to say just what I feel. I reproach myself that I kept you waiting. I suppose I thought it was for you to ask me, but you must know that anything you could have asked me I would have done for

you. You must know that the day in the wood, when we heard the bridal song about us, I was, with all my heart, with all my desire, your bride. And when I stand before God on His Throne I will tell Him, without shame, that I left earth weeping because I never lay as a bride in your arms.'

A little later she said: 'Now it is time to call my father.'

When she had kissed the old man, she asked to be allowed to sleep, she smiled to me and closed her eyes. She never opened them again.

SPRING continues his triumphant march up XXXVIII over Rough-Hill, with a great following of happy people from the town. Old and young, children and lovers, worthy men and matrons, yes, even the poor and the crippled, must all climb to Rough-Hill to greet the Spring.

Spring meets them, throwing golden sunshine on every side, and the happy people from the town point out exultantly to each other his wondrous deeds.

'Look, look, the hedgerow is budding, and violets are out on the bank. Do gather me some to put in my belt.'

'Take care, dear, don't step on that snail, and see the butterflies there, the yellow ones, and the red with black spots, do let them fly in peace; let them enjoy the Spring as we do.'

'Did you hear the starling, children? Did you see the little bird gathering straw for its nest?'

The crowd stops at the pavilion, now awaked from its winter sleep by spring. All through the winter a lonely stranger has been its only guest.

'Let us drain our glasses to Spring, for Spring is life, for life is joy——'

'What you don't eat throw to the sparrows, children. We must not forget the winter birds, now Spring is here.'

Up through the wood the happy people from the town follow the Spring.

'How delicious the scent of the pines and the earth is; but don't walk on the grass, for it rained last night.'

'I must go into the grass, for I have found a blue anemone, and look at those white ones. How many there are, when one looks closely.'

'And look at the beeches, how large the buds are already. I am sure they will be out before May, if this weather lasts.'

'Of course it will last. Just listen to the birds, how happy they are; they know all about it.'

Spring stands triumphant on the very crest of Rough-Hill, and the happy people break into joyous cries.

'Spring has reached even here. Look! the mount of the mill is covered with new grass, and the wings are shining like gold in the sunshine. In the miller's garden the fruit-trees are budding. I wonder if we dare steal a branch? I am sure it would blossom if we took it home.'

Then suddenly the door of the miller’s house opens, and a cold air sweeps over the many happy people, for a young woman lies cold and pale on her white bed. A man stands at her side. It is the stranger from Rough-Hill. His eyes do not weep any longer; he has no tears left. But he says, as he bends over his cold, pale bride: ‘Spring is dead!’

30th OF MARCH.

TO-DAY Greta was laid to rest in the grave-XXXIX
yard. In the small church of the Institution the service took place. All the old women sat round and wept tears of real sorrow for Greta, because she, who had brought youth and beauty into their withered hearts, was taken from us in the midst of her youthful joy. On her coffin they had laid wreaths made by their own trembling hands, wreaths of ivy and moss, adorned with immortelles and simple farewell inscriptions in black and white beads. And now they sang for her, who had sung for them, sang in their old quavering voices, the beautiful hymn: ‘Think when at last the mist has lifted.’ O my God, my God! It was here she should have stood as a bride, here where she now lay in her coffin, the bride of death clad in the white gown she had made herself for her bridal. My tired, tortured head sank on my old friend’s shoulder. She stroked me and talked to me as to an unhappy child, as she had done so often before in the old days. I think that both she and I

forgot that I was a grown man. It did me good to sit like that close to her innocent heart. It seemed to me my sorrow softened while she whispered : ' And then it must be beautiful for him to think of, that she will not be lying alone, but will be near his dear mother. These two will speak dear and loving words about him, of that he may be certain, and should he meet with sorrow and misfortune, he will feel their dear shadows comfortingly near him.'

The clergyman, the church's strong scourge for the old town's wickedness, stood in front of Greta's coffin. He cast a severe and searching glance over the congregation, but it was as if he involuntarily understood that here, at this young girl's coffin, in front of these weeping old women and this stricken man, all severity would be sacrilege, and it was as if a light of gentle humanity swept over his sharp features, and when he started to speak his voice trembled.

'I did not personally know this young woman, whom God has taken from us, just as she believed she was to enter on the greatest earthly happiness. But I have heard nothing of her that was not good and beautiful. She seemed, through her own nature, in the high and lonely place where she lived, to have found peace with God and with the world, and she also seems to have had the power of giving peace and strength to those around her. I do not know her nearest friends, those whom her death most affects, and I don't know if they in their sorrow think of the comfort I call the only

one. But my heart beats in pity and sympathy with their pain. I pray that the Almighty God will give her and them His peace. Amen.’

Alone with the clergyman I walk behind Greta’s coffin through the graveyard. I notice how Spring has started spreading his beauty over death. I see the flames of Spring, and in my ears still echo the clergyman’s words about God’s peace. My soul cries out in torture: ‘You lying priest, lying like the Spring on the graves. All the blossoms of the world cannot hide that hideousness of Death that she, my beloved, is given to the worms. All the priests of the world cannot conjure from the grave that God’s peace which is buried there with her for all eternity.’

The coffin is lowered into the grave. The ceremony of casting the earth is over. The clergyman presses my hand—and—I am left alone.

But I do not feel quite lonely until I, cold and shivering through sitting for a long time in the sharp, spring air, walk back to Rough-Hill, which now does not even shelter Greta’s cold clay.

So lonely, oh, so lonely!

APRIL.

I FLED to this place seeking loneliness. I XL found it. Had Greta not crossed my path I feel sure the loneliness would not have frightened me, for then I should not have known the loss which now pursues me like an outlaw.

My loneliness makes me an outlaw. Where shall

I find the corner that may be my sanctuary? Either I roam through the empty streets of the old town or I walk myself tired along the steep paths of Rough-Hill. Everywhere my loss follows me like a greedy raven, shrieking hoarsely in my ear, ready to pierce my heart with its sharp beak. I cannot find the house, the place, the tree, which does not cry out to me my loss. 'Remember, last time you were here she was with you; now you are alone and she will never be with you again. Here you sat with her talking of your happiness, dreaming of your future, but all you said, thought, and dreamt, was summer and sun, life and joy. Now earth covers her and your dream has vanished with the cold touch of death.'

I have sought peace in the reading-room of the monastery where before my mind was soothed by memories from bygone days. But there again the raven sat on my shoulder: 'Why, young monk, let your eyes rest longingly on the tree behind the wall? Stay where you are. Nobody waits for you when darkness falls over the monastery. In the garden all the nightingales are silent, and in the old tree only the raven builds his nest.'

I have been to the well-garden, but I dare not go there again. It seemed to me the children grew silent when they saw me, and in their big eyes I read sad questions. . . . 'Where is she, she who always came with you before, and who was so sweet to us? You must never come here alone; you must go and fetch her.'

My friend in the institution mourns my faithlessness. Just now she would like so much to show me her sympathy. She does not understand, and I have not the courage to tell her, that my wounded heart cannot run the gauntlet of all the pitiful glances inside the gates of the institution. They follow me up staircases and along corridors all the way to her door, and they receive me again in her room, greeting me from her own faithful eyes.

But most heartbreaking of all is it to visit Greta’s father. To be in the room which she filled with her grace and beauty, where my love mourns like a tortured animal for every step I tread, where the air still trembles with her death sigh, where the old man sits staring like blind folk with his empty eyes at the calamity he has wrought. What can he and I say to one another that will bring comfort? He hardly listens to the reasonable remarks with which I greet his self-reproach and his bewildered words about Greta’s accident being the revenge of the angry spirit of the mill. I wonder if I myself am quite unaffected by his curious imaginings, or is it merely the memory of that terrible morning which awakens fearsome thoughts in my mind and makes me shudder every time I pass the mill? It is still there. Its master has not yet condemned it.

But when my loss has chased me like an outlaw from place to place I try to seek rest in my work—in my book. While I write I forget that Greta is dead. She lives again in my book; in it she is resurrected with that God’s peace which she gave

me when, as a tired wanderer, I came to the loneliness of Rough-Hill.

30th OF APRIL.

XLI I HAVE finished my book. I have finished everything there is for me to do here.

Yesterday evening, when on the last page I had closed Greta's eyes with a farewell kiss and the empty white paper lay before me, then I understood that now indeed the lonely days on Rough-Hill had begun. Then I stood up, collected my things, packed my trunk, and told my landlord that I intended to leave by to-morrow's steamer.

What am I going to do? First and foremost leave this place. Go thither where work awaits me. Tired, because I thought it led to nothing, I gave it up. Without too great expectations I take it up again, because I feel that at all events it has some value in itself. Peace is only for the happy people; for the unhappy work is a solace.

Besides, let me admit it. When of late I have now and again for a little diversion entered one of the cafés in the town to look through a newspaper my fingers itched to once more take up my pen, to defend or attack what I read. I understood that as far as my mill was concerned it only needed a very light wind to set it again in motion. It also seemed to me that I understood Greta's father better. It was he himself, and not the spirit of the mill, that needed to hear the noise of the wheels and the swish of the wings. It was in his own heart that

the accusation of idleness sounded, and suddenly it seemed that I understood still more. I heard a warning cry: accursed be he who in blindness allows his mill to stop.

To-day I have been round the town saying good-bye. I have taken leave of the old town, of Rough-Hill, of everything, which holds for me the brightest and bitterest memories of my life.

I have said good-bye to my friend in the institution. To her faithfulness I entrusted the care of Greta's grave. For I know that the old miller will not go there until the day he is taken there for eternal rest. I said to my friend: 'Please do not adorn the grave with transient blossoms, those whose comfort is only a boasting lie, but cover it with the living memory's modest flowers such as ivy and immortelles.' Weeping, my friend gave me this promise. 'Her grave shall be tended as he wishes, as long as God lets me live, and when I leave this place others will continue my work. As long as only one is left who has seen her blessed face her grave shall not be neglected; of that he can be quite certain.'

I went also to Greta's father. I found him more responsive than he has been since the accident, but the news of my departure seemed to make no impression on him. What was I to him except in connection with Greta?

He told me that he had engaged the old woman who used to help in the house to come and live there and look after him. So he will have all he

needs. To move away from Rough-Hill was out of the question. Now more than ever. For now, he told me, he had arranged everything about the mill. Instead of pulling it down it was to stand as a memorial for Greta. All the machinery had been destroyed, and the wings were nailed firmly to the building and stood out in the shape of a cross towards the fjord. 'Neither the mill nor I,' he said, 'are able to do more mischief in this life. Together we stay here in this place, where we committed our crime. Besides, it is my fancy that when I am dead the mill shall be given to the community to serve as a landmark for sailors on the fjord, and on the map it shall be called Greta's Cross.'

From the miller's house I went out through the garden. It stood in Spring's first splendour, but it was evident that nobody any longer gave it thought and care. On the lawns the grass was wild and uncut, and in the beds the weeds grew as luxuriantly as the plants. I thought of the day it would again return to its primitive wildness and again become a prey to the cold west wind. The gentle hand of love and peace no longer guarded the oasis on Rough-Hill.

My last walk was to the graveyard, to her who was the sunshine of my childhood, and to her, who for a short but unforgettable day, became the sunshine of my manhood.

You two dear mothers, sleep in peace, side by side in the graveyard of my old town.

My trunk is packed. On the top of all my things

lies one of the little garments Greta made for our child.

1st OF MAY, ON BOARD.

THE steamer glided out of the harbour, past XLII
the castle with its sombre grey front, round the head of the pier, where my old friend stood waving good-bye. Behind me lay the old town, red and smiling amongst spring green fields and hills, with merry smoke from all the chimneys and stork-gossiping from the roofs. Slowly it pales in the evening mist. The steamer swung round a point of land and the town disappeared.

I felt as though the curtain had gone down on a drama, in the far-away dream-world of which I had lived for a short time. Then the steamer followed a new turn of the fjord, and for a moment I suddenly saw against the horizon the top of Rough-Hill and the mill with its black cross against the white ground.

For me the old town has vanished, and I return from whence I came, to old friends and old enemies.

Has this year been in vain, I wonder? Will it leave no trace like the fairy-tale dream-world after the curtain has gone down?

Certainly it will, for it has brought me that *Treuga Dei*, for which the world sighs, that God’s peace, which even our warlike ancestors did not grudge each other, that blessed reconciliation between themselves and others, which purifies the soul and strengthens the will. I return from

whence I came, though not the same as before. I have now, what I lacked before, a high and safe landmark for my voyage: Greta's Cross. My friends may receive me with pitiful shrugs of the shoulders, my enemies perhaps with scornful smiles, but they will soon realise that there is neither reason for pity nor for scorn. The God's peace, which has touched my soul, is not the result of any conversion. The landmark my life has gained does not lead me in any new direction. I only follow now a straighter road with more resolution.

On your death-bed, Greta, you reproached yourself that you died a virgin in my arms. I never doubted your willing generosity. Virgin or wife you would have been the same, and I can dream of no greater joy than to have rested by your side—your bridegroom. But you, my virgin bride, have taught me the hitherto unknown joy of renunciation. You have taught me the joy of being on the road to happiness, even if one never reaches the goal.

Again I set my mill moving. It must be so. It demands its rights from my youth and my talent, and I cannot help thinking that the mill wing, which killed you, deserves perhaps no condemnation. Perhaps, after all, it acted for the best when it unheedingly struck you down before the terrible hour had come when I, without wishing it, had again started my mill. The mill against whose wings you had sought rest. Indeed, Greta's Cross has taught me a lesson,

My dream is at an end. Through the spring night the steamer carries me back to my city of reality and work. The dream is at an end, God’s peace has failed, Greta is dead.

Was it a dream, or am I dreaming still? While I write this I seem to feel Greta’s hand on my shoulder, to hear her voice whispering in my ear:

‘God’s peace can never fail those who love.’

